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Man aims to give Toronto a chance to see The Interview

Torontonian reaches out to the stars of shelved movie in hopes of a charity screening — and Metro columnist says the film is worth seeing PAGES 3 & 34

WE MUST PAY ATTENTION TO PAKISTAN MASSACRE, PESHAWAR NATIVE SAYS

RYERSON PROFESSOR AND FORMER JOURNALIST MURTAZA HAIDER WORRIES TOO MANY TORONTONIANS ARE IGNORANT OF THE DEATH OF 132 CHILDREN IN TALIBAN ATTACK ON MILITARY SCHOOL PAGE 4

T.O. police to attend U.S. funerals

Ambush shootings. Head of city's police union says Toronto officers have the support of locals

GILBERT NGABO
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Anti-police sentiments in the U.S. are not being seen in Toronto, the head of the city's police union told Metro yesterday.

Mike McCormack added that city officers are heartbroken for their American colleagues and will be sending a "large delegation" to the funerals of the three police officers killed over the weekend.

"We're very concerned for the families who have lost their members in this brutal way," he said. "They were out doing their jobs, protecting their community."

Two officers were shot dead by a gunman in New York City on Saturday, while another was killed by a different shooter in Florida on Sunday morning.

"We're seeing a lot of anti-police rhetoric," McCormack said of the situation south of the border. Protests sprung up across the U.S. — and even in Toronto — after two unarmed black men died during confrontations with police. "When people are referring to police as 'enemy', we're very concerned."

He added that it is never right for people to start "demonizing" and "vilifying" officers.

While the Toronto Police Services have yet to make a statement, police departments in the U.S. appeared to be operating with a siege mentality.

The union representing New York police sent a message to officers encouraging them to respond to every radio call with two cars, and not make arrests "unless absolutely necessary."

The same letter told officers to wear bulletproof vests and added a word of caution. "Cowards such as yesterday's killer strike when you are distracted and vulnerable."

McCormack said that in Toronto, people are supportive and that he often hears "positive feedback." Since Saturday's shootings, people have approached officers on the streets to offer condolences.

For more on the U.S. police shootings, see page 26.

REPPING CANADA FOR THE HOLIDAYS

While others go home for Christmas, the teenagers selected for Canada's junior men's hockey team go away to represent their country. Max Domi, left, Frédérik Gauthier and Josh Morrissey have a bit of fun while practising in Toronto ahead of the IIHF World Junior Championship. The tournament, co-hosted by Toronto and Montreal, starts on Boxing Day. For more, see pages 8 and 44. DAVID VAN DYKE/METRO

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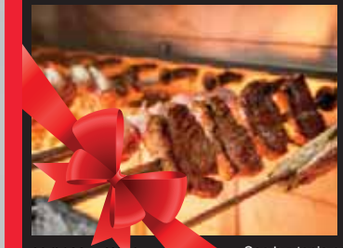

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Special Delivery

Sunnybrook tweets birth of holiday twins

The moment twins Charlea Dale and Bradley Robert were born via caesarean section, it was shared with the world on Twitter.

Sunnybrook Hospital made the infants the focus of its latest social-media project taking people inside medical procedures.

Dubbed the "Holiday Special Delivery," the birth took place during the second week of December. The hospital captured the moment to teach a lesson about the importance of immediate newborn-to-parent contact after a C-section.

The babies were placed on their parents' chests before being washed off, which isn't common practice. That route improves breastfeeding and fights post-natal depression, Dr. John Barrett explains in a YouTube video the hospital tweeted.

It's not the hospital's first Twitter project. Sunnybrook live-tweeted heart surgery and colon-cancer surgery earlier this year.

JESSICA SMITH CROSS/METRO

Newborn twins Charlea Dale, left, and Bradley Robert shortly after their birth at Sunnybrook Hospital. YOUTUBE

Man trying to screen The Interview in T.O.

Defying the threats.
Proceeds from movie or backup doc would help North Korean refugees

LUKE SIMCOE
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If Taylor Scollon gets his way, Torontonians will get to watch Kim Jong-un die in a fiery helicopter explosion after all.

Scollon, known for his work on the crowdfunded bus in Liberty Village, has made a personal appeal to James Franco and Seth Rogen asking for a copy of The Interview. If his wish is granted, Scollon plans to screen it at a local cinema Jan. 8.

The release of the film, starring Franco and Rogen as American journalists embroiled in a plot to assassinate the leader of North Korea, was cancelled last week by Sony Entertainment after a high-profile hack and threats of a "9/11-style attack."

The FBI issued a statement Friday blaming the hack — which leaked troves of sensitive data, including email logs and unreleased movie scripts — on North Korea.

"When you have cinema that's being suppressed for political reasons, in any situation, that's problematic," Scollon said. "It causes a chilling effect."

After news of the hack broke, New Regency cancelled its adaptation of Pyongyang, a graphic novel set in North Korea and written by Quebec cartoonist Guy Delisle. Steve Carrell was set to star in it.

Taylor Scollon is trying to bring The Interview to Toronto, possibly to the Royal Cinema on Jan. 8. LUKE SIMCOE/METRO

Scollon reached out to Franco and Rogen on Twitter last week. He hasn't heard back yet — and doesn't necessarily expect to — but the screening is a go regardless.

If he can't get his hands on The Interview, Scollon is thinking of showing Seoul Train, a documentary about refugees fleeing North Korea.

"There's a lot of humanitarian crises in the world, but I feel this one gets overshadowed by politics a lot," Scollon said.

"The people of North Korea are living under a genocide being committed against them by their own government every day.

"Frankly, that's what matters. That's a lot more outrageous than hacking Sony."

All proceeds from the screening will be donated to Liberty in North Korea, a California-based charity that assists North Korean refugees.

Scollon has yet to find a venue but told Metro the Royal Cinema on College Street reached out to him and would be willing to host.

History

Hollywood censorship

While this may be the first time a U.S. movie studio has capitulated to foreign threats, Hollywood hasn't really been a bastion of free speech in the past.

In 1930, studios bowed to pressure from Christian groups, which threatened to boycott films that offended their view of morality.

The result was the Motion Picture Production Code, which banned everything from "suggestive nudity" to drug use and "ridicule of the clergy." It was also used for political censorship, blocking a number of anti-Nazi films.

The code remained in effect until 1968.

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Deaths of children in Pakistan matter here: Ryerson professor

Insight. Reality of Pakistan Taliban attack is closer than we think, according to experts

ROSEMARY WESTWOOD
rosemary.westwood@metronews.ca

Christian children in Lahore, Pakistan, take part on Sunday in a prayer for victims killed in last week's Taliban attack on a military-run school in Peshawar. K.M. CHAUDARY/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

It was the worst terrorist attack in Pakistan's history, yet some people in Toronto are completely unaware that 132 children were killed at a school there.

And that's exactly the kind of ignorance Murtaza Haider fears.

"I don't know about that," a woman said last week in regards to the attack, as she pushed a stroller through Yonge Station.

Another man and woman — among a handful of people Metro questioned about the Dec. 16 Taliban attack on a Peshawar school — said the same.

The story slipped so quickly from Canadian newscasts that Haider — a Peshawar native, former journalist and now associate professor at Ryerson University — hardly blames people for missing the images of bloodied school rooms strewn with notebooks and distraught families carrying the broken bodies of their children.

Unlike the Sandy Hook killings or Lac Mégantic, Que. disaster, there has been relatively little media interest in the Peshawar-attack story.

We need to pay attention, Haider said, because terrorism bred in hotbeds like Peshawar affects us here.

Peshawar is a city that had links to Osama bin Laden, a city where the Taliban has killed many people in recent years.

"If we choose to stay ignorant and move our news stories very quick to what is happening with Justin Bieber, we run the risk of paying the price," Haider said.

Peshawar is 11,000 kilometres from Toronto, but "the absence of distance is what scares me," he said.

"We still have the same mentality, that our kids in Ottawa or downtown Toronto or Quebec would have no access to the kind of tools that these terrorists are using."

It's the wrong mindset, he said, thanks to what Haider calls "i-jihad," where "someone sitting in a basement in Peshawar or Iraq can create a video to inspire a misguided youth in Ottawa."

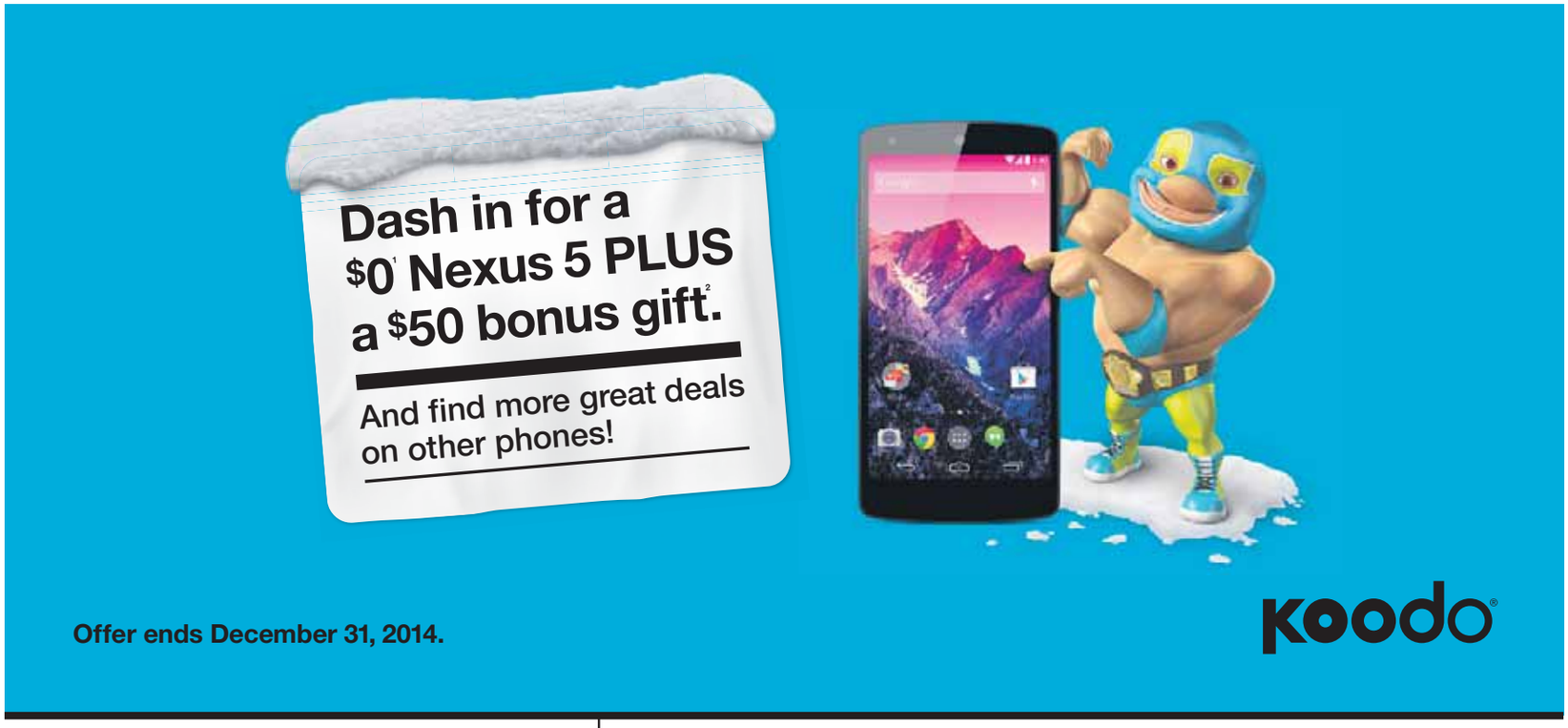
Tariq Amin-Khan, an expert on global security and militant Islam, is calling on more people to denounce acts of terrorism abroad and pressure governments to seek peaceful solutions.

"I don't think the border populace in Canada sees that this is their problem," said the Pakistan native who also teaches at Ryerson. "But I think there are elements within the population — especially immigrant people and the population connected to that part of the world — who feel far more intensely about what has happened, and they feel the role that Canada and other Western governments have to play."

For Haider, that means doing more to help forces like Pakistan's army tasked with fighting at the frontlines of terrorism. For Amin-Khan, that means taking responsibility for the way Western foreign policy has shaped the war on terror, and even, perhaps, helped to create it.

After all, our histories and futures are intertwined, Haider said.

A mere 30 kilometres from the Peshawar school that was attacked sits the Warsak Dam, Haider said. It's a hydroelectric project financed by the Canadian government in the 1960s, atop of which the Canadian flag still flies.



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Your long-lost glove could be waiting for you

Finders aren't keepers.
TTC lost articles office sees it all

So, you think no one cares that you left your wallet, cellphone, tablet, Metropass, gloves, jacket, ring or passport on the TTC the other day?

Think again. There's an excellent chance your item — along with thousands of others left behind in the last few months — is sitting in one of the many, many cubby holes that line the walls, floor to ceiling, at the TTC's lost articles office at Bay Station.

Sandra D'Amato is the TTC's senior customer service representative for lost articles. She notes that a lot of your fellow riders are more conscientious and caring than you might think. About 50,000 items are turned into TTC lost and found yearly. The holiday season can be especially busy with people carrying extra packages and being distracted by errands.

On one shelf alone, marked "November," there are about two dozen wallets, each tagged with a slip detailing where it was picked up, on what date and, better yet, a note indicating the owner has been found.

In another room, reserved for the forever lost — home to items that haven't been picked up after about two to three months — there are other surprising sights.

At least a dozen bikes are lined up, waiting to be sent out to auction. Nearby, a cardboard box about the size of a banker's box is filled to the brim with important documents: passports, health cards, drivers' licences — all unclaimed despite the best efforts of the four full-time staff who work in the office.

Every single item turned in gets a number, is filed by date and where it was lost and is entered into the TTC's computer system.

Hard to forget

The more unlikely items left behind by riders over the last 20 years include: a dining room chair, wheelchairs, mobility scooters and prosthetic legs (yes, more than one).

Michael Stafrace, who works in the TTC lost articles office at Bay Station, is always ready for a rainy day. Umbrellas are among the most common items to land in the transit system's lost and found room. DAVID VAN DYKE/METRO

Workers try to find the owner of items with contain personal information, checking the contents of wallets and purses and even removing SIM cards from mobile phones. If phone calls don't work, and an address is available, a card will be mailed, notifying the owner that the item is at the lost and found. Strangely, D'Amato says, many people are more upset about the loss of low-value items, such as gloves or a travel mug, than something like a wallet.

"It's because they don't expect a wallet to be turned in. But they expect to get their gloves back," says D'Amato, who has seen a lot in her more than 20 years in the office.

Finders, on the other hand, often take the opposite point of view: They are more likely to carefully return a high-value item than an umbrella.

One very commonly lost item may soon be a thing of the past, however. When the TTC completes its switchover to the new Presto payment system, Metropasses will become obsolete.

If you lose your Presto card and you have registered it with the company, the card can simply be cancelled, and a new one issued. P.M. CHISHOLM/FOR METRO

Don't be a lose-r

- **Outerwear is often lost when weather changes throughout the day.** When you take your jacket off because it's warmed up, put it in your bag or attach it to your body in some way.
- **Switching travel modes, from train to bus, for instance, can lead to leaving things behind.** Many bikes stowed on the front of buses are forgotten — about 250 last summer alone.
- **If you lose something, always check with the TTC lost articles office, no matter how small, large or valuable the item may be.** The office is open from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. weekdays and you can call 416-393-4100 from noon to 5 p.m. Staff there may already be looking for you.

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Junior squad more family than team

World junior hockey championship. Team Canada will be looking to reclaim gold when it hits the ice at the 2015 tournament

JESSICA SMITH CROSS
jessica.smithcross@metronews.ca

While most people go home for the holidays, Team Canada's players go away.

"Your team becomes your family," said goalie Eric Comrie, of Edmonton, one of the teenagers spending Christmas representing their country at the world junior hockey championship. "It's one of those times you're going to remember; it's going to be awesome."

For the players, Dec. 25 isn't just Christmas, it's the day before the puck drops in Montreal and one they'll be celebrating together.

"I'm the happiest guy in the world to be spending Christmas with these guys," Comrie added.

All 10 teams will be put up in Montreal hotels for Christmas. Last year, they were in Malmö, Sweden.

"I'm not sure whose place it was, but we got to go to a castle. They treated us. They had a North American-style turkey dinner with all the accompaniments," said defenceman Josh Morrissey of Calgary. "It's an experience you cherish and you want nothing more than to be here. Usually, there is some big surprise."

Last year, assistant coach Ryan McGill dressed up as Santa Claus, and the team received presents from sponsors, said centre Curtis Lazar, of Vernon, B.C.

"It brings you closer together and it's a great way to start off the tournament. It's going to be two weeks we'll never forget," Lazar said. "You know, the holiday season is about catching up with those people closest to you, and in this case it's our hockey team. I'm expecting the same thing in Montreal."

Quoted

"The holiday season is about catching up with those people closest to you, and in this case it's our hockey team. I'm expecting the same thing in Montreal."

Ottawa Senators centre Curtis Lazar, who will be competing in the world junior hockey championship as part of Team Canada.

Team Canada's Curtis Lazar smiles during a practice in Toronto just before an impromptu team photo on Saturday. FRANK GUNN/THE CANADIAN PRESS

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Candidate wins by voting for self

The loser in the race for Peel Region chairman is crying foul after the winner voted for himself, essentially breaking a tie.

"It is completely unfair," said John Sanderson, who ran against Frank Dale for the region's top job. "The vote was stacked against me. I could not cast a vote for myself, so why should he?"

In Peel Region, the new chairman or chairwoman is selected by the 24 regional councillors. Anyone can run for the job but only councillors can vote. Sanderson couldn't vote for himself because he is not a member of council.

Now, he argues, Dale was in a conflict of interest because the Mississauga regional councillor voted to give himself the chairman's job, which this year came with a salary of $184,898.

It's an unusual occurrence, but the vote appears to be allowed by the provincial Municipal Conflict of Interest Act.

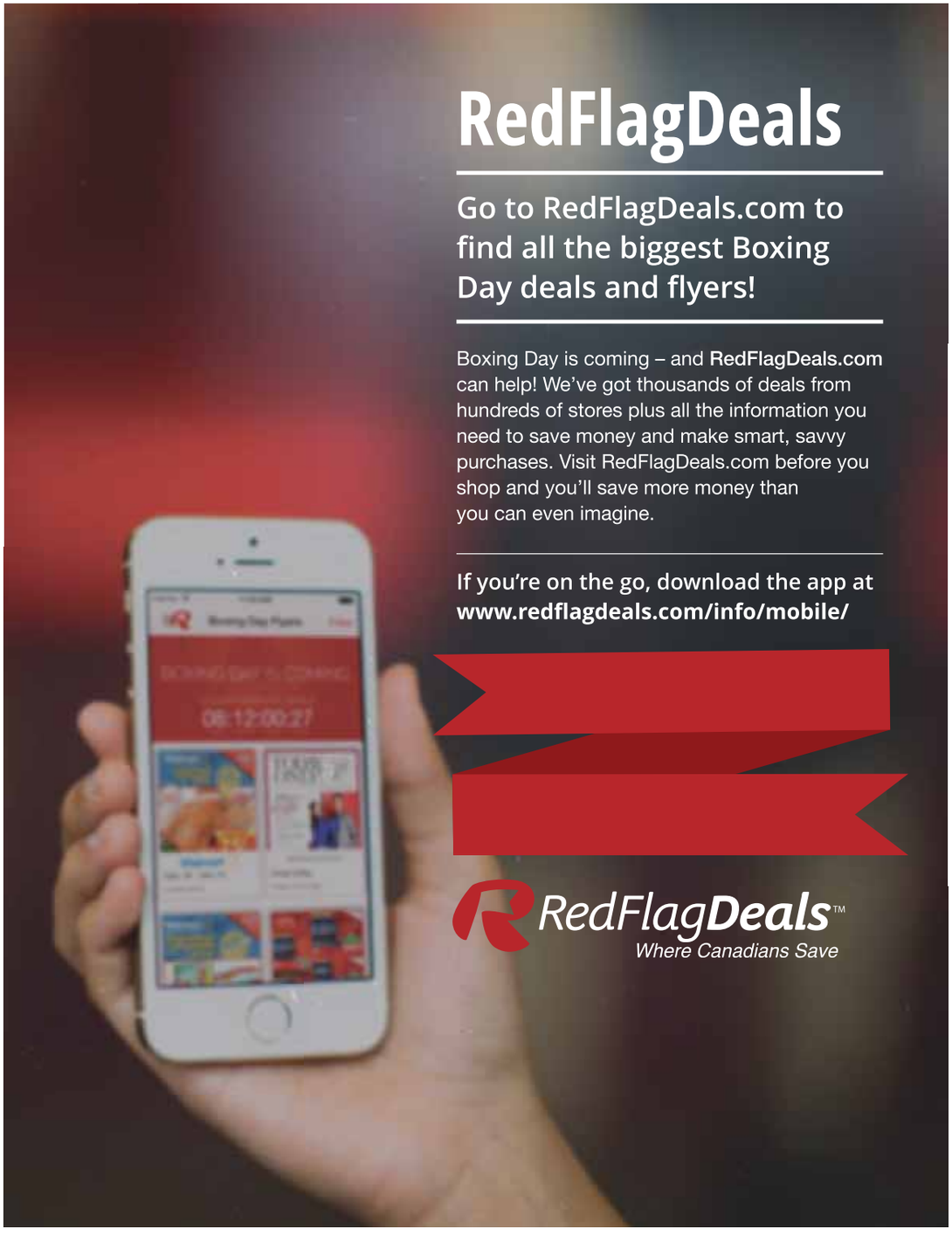
The act requires politicians to withdraw from a vote if he or she stands to benefit financially from the outcome, but it also leaves room for exceptions. Dale was allowed to vote under one such exception.

Now the Peel vote has some observers calling for changes to the provincial law.

The Ministry of Municipal Affairs is already working on a review of the act, following inquiries involving former mayors Hazel McCallion and Rob Ford that highlighted other flaws in the nearly 40-year-old legislation.

"The act is hard to understand," says St. Catharines-based lawyer Monique Atherton, who specializes in municipal law. "It should be written in a way that's easy to understand."

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE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Premier Kathleen Wynne, right, along with Minister Steven Del Duca, left, and Bruce McCuaig, CEO Metrolinx, unveil the new Union Pearson Express earlier this month. A new poll says Torontonians find the service's proposed fare too expensive. BERNARD WEIL/TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

UPX fare too steep: Poll

Even for the rich. Two-thirds of respondents, including those who make over $100K, find airport link too pricey

Torontonians are far from sold on the $27.50 adult ticket price of the new Union Pearson Express (UPX) rail service. But a new poll from Forum Research suggests that the public is on board with John Tory's SmartTrack trains.

About two-thirds of poll respondents, 69 per cent, said the UPX fares announced earlier this month were too expensive. That was true in all income groups, including those in the $100,000 to $250,000 bracket, where 73 per cent said the price was too high.

Metrolinx has built the fare structure so many riders will pay less. Those using a Presto card will pay only $19 once they have purchased the $6 provincial smart card.

There are also UPX discounts for airport workers and for seniors, students and families.

But Forum found only 23 per cent of respondents think UPX is priced "about right." Even among the $250,000-plus income group, only 29 per cent thought it was appropriately priced. It's a clear indication that the ticket is too steep, at least for Torontonians, said Forum Research president Lorne Bozinoff.

Part of that might be a result of confusion over the positioning of the service. Bozinoff thinks many Torontonians see it more as a public transit service like a subway, rather than the executive, premium service that Metrolinx is marketing.

The poll shows that only 42 per cent of respondents would be very likely or somewhat likely to use UPX, which will have two stops. at Bloor Street and Weston Road. between Union Station and Pearson. Fifty-four per cent indicated they would be not very likely or not at all likely to use it.

"Maybe this is a service is more for visitors. There are no visitors (to Toronto) in this sample. If you come from out of town it's a handy thing. If you live here, you have more options," said Bozinoff.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Meanwhile, Smartrack

Tory's plan to run express service on GO train tracks around Toronto, has, however, found favour with residents, according to the poll.

- **67 per cent.** A full 67 per cent of respondents said they were aware of the SmartTrack transit plan and approved of it.

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For Toronto's next top cop, the bar has been set high.
If Chief Bill Blair's successor, taking over this spring, is to fulfill all demands identified in a recent public consultation process involving 600 people, he or she will have a lot to contend with.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Toronto's next police chief:

5

priorities set by the public

1 Reining in the budget

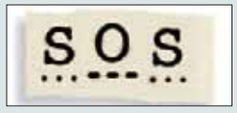
More than half of those surveyed put the cost of policing among the biggest issues currently facing Toronto police. Participants said the next chief must effectively use existing money, or ideally, lower the cost of policing.

2 Race relations

As the 20-plus deputations at last Monday's Toronto police board meeting indicated, serious concerns continue about the controversial "carding" practice.

The Toronto police practice of randomly stopping and documenting members of the public has disproportionately targeted people with black or brown skin.

3 Handling of people in crisis



The Sammy Yatim shooting, as well as the coroner's inquest into three Toronto police shootings were on the minds of people consulted. The issue of how officers respond in situations involving emotionally disturbed people carrying perceived weapons has become increasingly important during Blair's tenure.

4 Respect from rank and file

Toronto police employees were "very clear" during their consultations: The next chief needs to have the respect and trust of officers.

The next top cop must demonstrate that he or she has walked in the shoes of officers, whether in Toronto or another major urban centre.

5 Ability to embrace the future

Hacking. Identity theft. Cyberbullying. Crime is changing, and Toronto's force needs to be able to keep up, respondents said. That means the ability to respond to emerging crime trends by bringing "cutting-edge technology ideas" to the force.

The chief, too, must be comfortable with new media. He or she should ideally display that knowledge — and communicate with more citizens — by having a personal Twitter or Facebook account, respondents said.

Holiday Service Information

Holiday Subway Service Schedule

Thursday, December 25:

Subway starts at 9:00 a.m.

Wednesday, December 31:

Most routes with Monday – Friday late-evening service extended until 4:00 a.m.

New Year's Eve last subway times:

Line 1: north from Union Station at 3:30 a.m.
Line 2: east or west from Bloor-Yonge Station at 3:37 a.m.
Line 3: east from Kennedy Station at 4:07 a.m.
Line 4: east from Sheppard-Yonge Station at 3:58 a.m.

Thursday, January 1:

Subway starts at 9:00 a.m.

Holiday Bus/Streetcar Service Schedule

More information on bus and streetcar routes can be found at **ttc.ca.**

TORONTO TRANSIT COMMISSION

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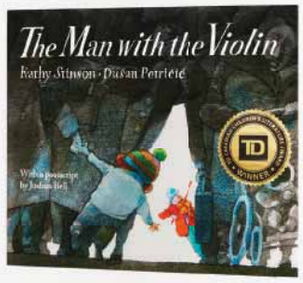


Congratulations to the 2014 TD Canadian Children's Literature Award winner!

AUTHOR: Kathy Stinson
ILLUSTRATOR: Dušan Petričić
PUBLISHER: Annick Press

Dylan was someone who noticed things.

His mom was someone who didn't.

One Friday in January was a day like any other until…

Music!

The high notes soar to the ceiling.
The low notes swoop to the floor.
All the notes swirl and sweep around the blur of people rushing here and rushing there. The music is telling an exciting story. It makes the hairs on the back of Dylan's neck tickle.

"Mom, wait!"

The man with the violin sways this way and that. His fingers move quickly. His bow dances across the strings. The skittering notes make Dylan want to dance too. Then the music slows and the man's eyes close as if the music is carrying him from bustle–bustle–bustle to somewhere far, far away.

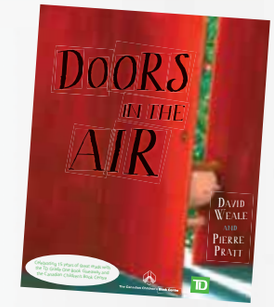
"Please, Mom? Can't we stop? Please?"

If only they could listen for even a minute!

"Not today."

Stop by Chapters Indigo and pick up your TD Canadian Children's Literature Award-winning book!

DOORS IN THE AIR



AUTHOR: David Weale
ILLUSTRATOR: Pierre Pratt
PUBLISHER: Orca Book Publishers

Doors in the air
Doors in the air
There's one over here
And one over there

So if you feel blue
In a sad, soggy space
Imagine a door
To a happier place

Fly off to the moon
It's not very far
Remember, you don't
Have to stay where you are

Celebrating 15 years of great reads with the TD Grade One Book Giveaway

TD PRESENTS
TD Real Reads

Working together with the Canadian Children's Book Centre (CCBC), we are celebrating 15 years of great reads. To learn more about the CCBC, visit **bookcentre.ca**.

As a supporter of children's literacy, TD is helping to share the joy of reading with Canadian kids.

Visit tdreads.com

The Canadian Children's Book Centre

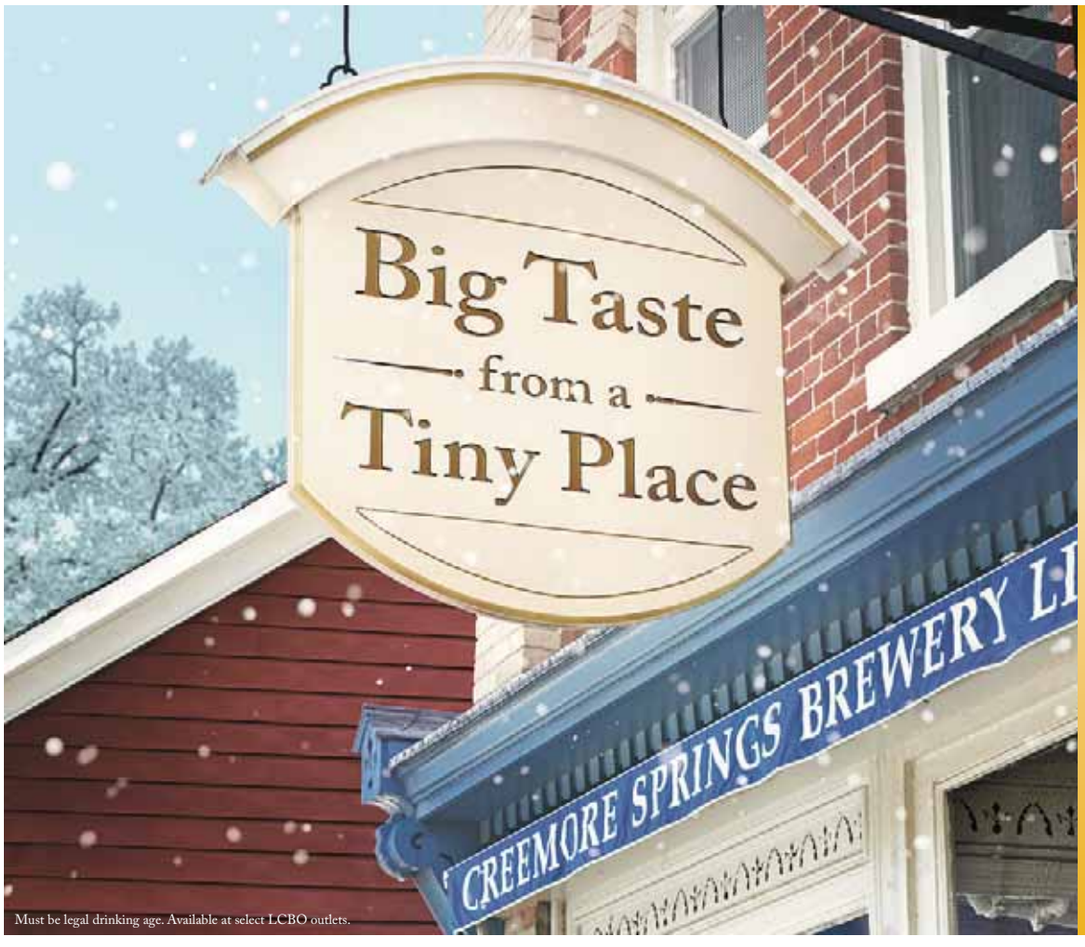
It's the way we were

Toronto's Black Creek Pioneer Village transported visitors to 1860s Ontario during its Christmas by Lamplight event. On the final night, carollers, folk singers and choirs could be found in the holiday-decorated homes and workshops.

Santa Claus greats visitors inside Flynn House. ALL PHOTOS BY STEVE RUSSELL/TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Visitors arrive at the Fisherville Church where the Ambiance Singers were singing carols.

Left: Inside the Edgeley Mennonite Meeting House, the Playford Players (Philip Corke on guitar and Roland Packer on hammer dulcimer), play some old favourites. Right: Tarts are removed from the fireplace oven in Halfway House Inn.



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MILTON
Milton Mall

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South Common
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NORTH YORK
Centerpoint Mall
Fairview Mall
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OAKVILLE
Oakville Place
South Oakville Centre

OSHAWA
Five Points Mall
Oshawa Centre

PICKERING
Pickering Town Centre

RICHMOND HILL
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Hillcrest Mall

SCARBOROUGH
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Scarborough Town Centre
Woodside Square

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Rutherford Road
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3015 Bloor Street West
2400 Eglinton Avenue
1911 Finch Avenue West, SB Unit K13
333 King Street East
1712A Queen Street East
290 Queen Street West
1448 Queen Street West
222 Spadina Avenue, Unit 3A
2181 Steeles Avenue West, Unit B10
363 Yonge Street
2300 Yonge Street, Unit S22, concourse level
2674 Yonge Street
4841 Yonge Street
5150 Yonge Street, Unit G3
6064 Yonge Street
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Cedarbrae Mall
College Park
Dufferin Mall
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Gerrard Square
Lawrence Square
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Oriental Centre Mall
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Restitution and forfeiture

Toronto man ordered to pay $1.5M in credit card scheme

Prosecutors described a Toronto man's massive credit card fraud scheme as high-tech bank robbery — stealing the identities of 38,000 people in order to bilk dozens of banks. So when he was convicted of mail fraud in February 2011, the federal government began the arduous task of figuring out just how much each victim was owed.

Years later, following the government's petition to the 8th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, a federal judge ordered Adekunle Adetiloye to pay about $1.5 million in restitution and forfeiture. Adetiloye is appealing the Dec. 8 judgment.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Nick Chase said it isn't clear whether anyone will see the restitution payments. Adetiloye's lawyer wouldn't comment on his client's financial situation.

Adetiloye's 18-year prison sentence, issued in January 2012, capped a lengthy international investigation into fake debt-collection agencies. Bank officials, investigators and prosecutors called it one of the most complex schemes perpetrated in the financial industry. It took nearly eight years to investigate and litigate.

The case wound up in North Dakota because U.S. Bank, one of the victims, is based in Fargo.

U.S. District Judge Ralph Erickson in March 2012 set both restitution and forfeiture at just $1,700.

The circuit court, on appeal from the government, sent the case back to district court for review. Erickson eventually ordered Adetiloye to pay about $770,000 to 17 banks. The largest award, nearly $220,000, was for Citi Cards, followed by more than $150,000 to U.S. Bank. The individual awards total about $16,000, the largest for $1,910. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Highline model shown

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Crystal Diljohn, right, is comforted by her mother Denise Thompson during a vigil for 14-year-old Amaria Diljohn, who was killed in a TTC hit-and-run on Friday. STEVE RUSSELL/TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

'My child is not trash'

Fatal bus crash. Mother of 14-year-old girl killed in a TTC crash Friday grieves for her daughter

Crystal Diljohn was supposed to take her daughter, Amaria, Christmas shopping Saturday. Instead, she's planning her funeral.

The 14-year-old Scarborough girl was killed Friday evening after she was hit by a TTC bus. Toronto Police are calling it a hit-and-run. The driver, a 27-year-old man, has since turned himself in. He has not been charged.

Speaking to Torstar News Service from her mother's home Saturday evening, Diljohn, 32, said she was devastated that her only child, affectionately dubbed Momo, had died just steps from her home.

"My child is not trash. How could you hit her and leave her? I'm angry that's how she died — alone on the ground."

Police were called to Finch Avenue and Neilson Road around 5:30 p.m. Friday where they found Amaria without vital signs. She was pronounced dead at the scene.

Amaria was trying to cross Neilson Road from east to west when she was hit, according to police. At the time, the 133 Neilson bus had been driving north on Neilson Road and was making a right turn on Finch Avenue East. The bus failed to remain at the scene of the crash.

Diljohn said she laid awake in that bed all night Friday, her hands occasionally reaching out to touch the spot normally occupied by her daughter.

When Amaria, who had gone to the mall after school, didn't show up at home Friday evening, Diljohn began making increasingly frantic phone calls to her daughter's cellphone. Eventually, a Toronto police officer answered and a pair of detectives delivered the news.

Friends have set up a memorial page on Facebook for Amaria and a vigil was held for her at 5 p.m. Sunday at the Neilson Road and Finch Avenue intersection.

In a statement issued Saturday afternoon, the TTC said it is co-operating fully with the investigation and that video from the bus has been submitted to police. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Other TTC collisions

This incident is the latest in a string of collisions involving the TTC over the last few years. According a Torstar report in July, TTC vehicles have been involved in 18,000 collisions since 2009.

- Nearly 5,000 of those were deemed preventable.
- The database obtained by Torstar, which only includes number up to 2013, shows an average of 3,564 collisions a year.

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Blue Bin

- aluminum trays, pie plates, roasting pans
- cookie tins
- plastic disposable cups, plates
- foam food and protective packaging
- paper gift wrap, cards (no foil wrap)

Green Bin

- meat, including bones
- breads
- cakes, cookies
- fruits, vegetables
- paper napkins
- paper plates

Garbage

- plastic film, overwrap, bubble wrap
- foil gift wrap
- ribbons, bows
- aluminum foil
- dishes, glasses
- wooden fruit crates

Not sure how to dispose of an item? Use the Waste Wizard at toronto.ca/recycle or call 311.
Christmas tree collection occurs in January. Remove all tinsel, lights, decorations and plastic bags before collection.

Curbside collection changes this Holiday Season

There is no curbside recycling/organics/garbage collection on Christmas Day, December 25 and New Year's Day, January 1. Check your calendar for Thursday and Friday collection schedule changes.

TORONTO

Livegreen Toronto

Call 311

‘Flashlight baby’ doing well one year later

Pearson Mbonda, with mom Paula Mbonda. Pearson was born by flashlight during the 2013 ice storm. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

The ice storm. After his dramatic entry into the world, Baby Pearson is ‘active, fun’

Community

“A lot of people identify with that time and heard our story when they got power ... Then they start retelling me their story. It seems like his birth initiates the stories that they went through.”

Paula Mbonda

Baby Pearson took one look at the GTA’s wicked winter last year and seemingly decided to hibernate.

The baby born by flashlight during last December’s crippling ice storm, now a healthy one-year-old, spent the first three months of his life sleeping up to 21 hours a day, according to his mom, Paula Mbonda.

“Pearson went into a bit of hibernation for the first three months,” said Mbonda. “He was among the sleepiest babies my midwife has ever seen. We were sort of wondering what’s going on. He slept for 21 hours a day for the first three months. But he kept meeting all the milestones.”

The infant would snooze anywhere — at home in his mother’s arms, in his cradle, and even at the hockey arena while his older brothers played.

“We always joke that maybe the cold arena was what felt like home to him so he could easily fall asleep there,” said Mbonda. “We wondered if his personality would be quieter or more passive in any way, but it’s not — he’s active and fun.”

Pearson’s entry into the world, one of many stories of triumph and tragedy to emerge from the ice storm, was far from the bucolic, sleepy-baby calm that characterized his first months.

Mbonda woke up at 3:15 a.m. on Dec. 22 experiencing contractions.

It was the peak of the devastating storm that paralyzed the GTA and would see more than a million people without power, including large buildings and institutions such as the hospital where Mbonda planned to deliver her baby.

She and her husband, Al, phoned their midwife, who told them the hospital had been hit by the blackout. All of the roads had been coated in a thick layer of ice as 20-30 mm of freezing rain fell on the GTA.

They left their Pickering home and slowly, carefully got Mbonda to Rouge Valley Ajax and Pickering Hospital, where staff would deliver Pearson by flashlight.

“The drive itself was so, so scary,” said Mbonda in an interview with the Star.

Looking back, Mbonda says she wishes she had considered home birth more seriously in the event of an emergency.

“That’s the lesson — that I believe in midwifery and I wonder if I should have considered home birth to not have the risk of that drive,” said Mbonda.

Pearson’s pedigree has made him a bit of a celebrity in the parenting groups that Mbonda attends. She said for many, the news of a baby being born during the ice storm gave them hope. She just needs to give them his birth date and they recall their time in the dark.

“A lot of people identify with that time and heard our story when they got power,” said Mbonda. “Then they start retelling me their story. It seems like his birth initiates the stories that they went through.”

A neighbour gave Mbonda a gift to commemorate how Pearson came into the world: a small Lego baby Velcroed to a flashlight.

“It’s a nice little reminder as he’s the flashlight baby,” said Mbonda.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

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Nutrition North: What went wrong?

Food security in the North. Many have expressed concern that businesses are not passing Nutrition North subsidy to consumers

For years, northerners have complained about Nutrition North to anyone who would listen, grumbling that the $60-million annual federal food subsidy was doing little to ease their staggering grocery costs.

No one, it seemed, took much notice.

That all changed last month, when auditor general Michael Ferguson revealed that the program's overseers are largely in the dark about whether the subsidy is doing anything for the people who need it the most.

One of Ferguson's observations in particular struck a nerve with some northerners: that some retailers are cashing in on the subsidy.

"The stores are making money based on the amount of food they're bringing in, and in return they're supposed to lower their food price," said Leesee Papatsie, who helped organize Nunavut-wide food price protests. "In upper, High Arctic communities, the subsidy is higher than the freight cost. So they're making money like that."

Food has always cost more in the North, due to the expense of shipping it in from other parts of Canada, the region's relatively small and dispersed population, and the distance from major transportation hubs.

Aboriginal Affairs has not required merchants to report their profit margins, which over time would indicate whether the full subsidy is being passed on. Ferguson's report said such a measure would help quell skepticism about whether consumers are actually getting the full benefit of the subsidy.

The department now says that as of April 1, retailers will have to provide information on their profit margins.

Nutrition North gives retailers a subsidy based on the weight of eligible foods shipped to eligible communities. But the auditor general found Aboriginal Affairs did not choose eligible communities based on need.

To highlight the problem, Ferguson's team pointed to two remote communities in northern Ontario, both about the same distance to the nearest town and lacking year-round road access. One is eligible for a subsidy of $1.60 a kilogram; the other only five cents a kilogram.

The audit found that the department chose communities based on two factors: whether they had year-round road access and if they had used the old Food Mail program.

Communities that made very little use of Food Mail are eligible for only a partial subsidy of five cents per kilogram, while places that did not use food mail aren't eligible.

"Consequently, community eligibility is based on past usage instead of current need," the report says.

"As a result, there may be other isolated northern communities, not benefiting from the subsidy, where access to affordable, nutritious food may be an issue." THE CANADIAN PRESS

A price tag lists the price and subsidy of a four-litre jug of milk at a grocery store in Iqaluit, Nunavut on Dec, 8, 2014. SEAN KILPATRICK/THE CANADIAN PRESS

In detail

Food has always cost more in the North, due to the expense of shipping it in from other parts of Canada.

- The federal government used to subsidize shipping costs through the old Food Mail program.
- Under Food Mail, retailers had to rely on airlines chosen by Canada Post to get the subsidized freight rate.
- But in 2011, the Conservatives replaced Food Mail with Nutrition North, which shifted the subsidy to retailers, who in turn were expected to pass it on by cutting food costs for consumers.
- Many people are skeptical that businesses are actually passing on the full subsidy to the consumers.

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Handgun incident

Canadian man shot by U.S. border guards

The U.S. border agency says a Canadian man was shot after allegedly pointing a handgun at guards at the Ambassador Bridge between Windsor, Ont., and Detroit.

U.S. Customs and Border Protection says he stopped his car near the U.S. inspection booth at 3 a.m. Sunday and walked toward border officers while waving a gun. It says the officers ordered him to drop the weapon but he pointed it their direction, prompting them to open fire.

The agency says the man, who it hasn't identified, was treated and released from hospital before being taken into custody.

It says the man has had "previous encounters" with Canadian law enforcement.

The statement says border and Department of Homeland Security officials are investigating along with Detroit police.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Reader beware. Polls show federal race tightening, but can't offer explanation

A spate of public opinion surveys this autumn has prompted the usual end-of-year parsing of political fortunes and chin-stroking prognostications about a federal election that may still be 10 months in the future.

Stephen Harper's Conservatives are up. Justin Trudeau's Liberals are down. Tom Mulcair's New Democrats are out of it. Reader beware.

In fact, a look at months of results from six different pollsters suggests Trudeau's Liberals remain imperviously buoyant, Harper's Tories have seen only marginal gains despite a number of issues breaking their way, and NDP fortunes are stalled, notwithstanding Mulcair's widely lauded parliamentary performance.

In the past week alone, national polls from recognized opinion surveyors have placed Liberal support as high as 41 per cent (Forum Research) and as low as 32 per cent (EKOS), Conservative support from 33 to 31 per cent and NDP support at 19 (Leger), 20 (Forum) and 17 per cent (EKOS).

In September, before an event-packed fall that supposedly moved the public opinion dial, Liberals polled as high as 38 per cent (Abacus and Ipsos Reid), Conservatives were between 30 and 31 per cent and New Democrats between 21 and 23.

ThreeHundredEight.com, which aggregates political polling, says the average of all public polls put Liberal support last week at 36 per cent, Conservatives at 32 and the NDP at 20. In September, those averages were 38-30-22.

"It's important not to make too much of relatively small movements in the polls," says Paul Adams, a former parliamentary reporter and pollster who now teaches journalism at Carleton University in Ottawa.

It's always easy to construct a narrative around why that might be, he added — but pundits and pollsters should be careful with such story lines.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

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RCMP suggest charges against B.C. man who allegedly struck, left child at bus stop

RCMP are recommending charges against a man who they say struck a three-year-old boy in the face and abandoned him at a bus stop in Surrey, B.C.

Staff Sgt. Joe Johal says police are recommending charges of assault and child abandonment. Johal says the man is a Surrey resident who is related to the child but would not confirm he is the boy's father.

The man has been released from custody with conditions and a court appearance is scheduled, something B.C. police have the power to do pending Crown approval of charges.

Johal thanked witnesses who contacted police on Saturday morning about the incident as well as those who circulated the boy's photo on social media.

Callers reported the boy was struck in the face and pushed by a man who then got on a bus, leaving the boy behind.

"A lot of people called and (there were) a lot of tips, and even the arrest that took place was due to a tip from a citizen who observed and called us," said Johal in an interview on Sunday.

The boy has since been reunited with his mother. The Ministry of Children and Family Development was involved Saturday and will keep the file open, said Johal.

Lucy Ingram, an employee at nearby Berezan Liquor Store, said she brought the boy inside the store after a customer told her he had been left at the stop.

The investigation continues and no names have been released yet. THE CANADIAN PRESS

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Aiden Chi is seen in the food court at the University of Calgary's MacEwan Hall. Chi has turned to crowd-funding to raise some of his tuition amid fears he'll be forced to return to his native South Korea and serve in the country's military. JEREMY NOLAIS/METRO IN CALGARY

Calgary student fearful of forced return to Korea

'Really scary.' International tuition three times that charged for Canadian students

JEREMY NOLAIS
Metro in Calgary

Aiden Chi, 20, is a proud Canadian, regardless of whether he's officially recognized as such.

His parents sent him to Canada from his native South Korea seven years ago hoping he'd improve his English, get a good job and start a family.

They were never able to obtain proper citizenship, but Chi managed to enrol as an international student in the University of Calgary's business program where he is now in second year.

Extending his work visa depends on his continuing studies, but he faces a $30,000 roadblock to get through his third year.

Adding to Chi's troubles, if he can't stay here, he could be forced to return to Korea, where every man 20 or older must serve two years in the military.

"It's actually really scary," he said. "I don't want to leave anything behind, all of my work and everything. It feels like everything I did here will be for nothing."

There is also the long-standing threat of an escalation in violence between his homeland and its totalitarian neighbours to the north. Chi said he believes the military service requirement stems from fears of an "emergency situation" that would plunge the two countries into war once more.

"You never know what's going to happen," he said.

Chi's parents supported him through the first half of his degree but can no longer afford to do so.

The university, meanwhile, maintains that international students pay the true cost of tuition ($1,833.84 per course, according to the school's website) whereas Canadian students pay a subsidized rate ($538.59 per course) based on taxes paid to Revenue Canada.

School officials encouraged Chi to visit the on-campus financial aid office and said international students enrolled in eligible programs are often allowed to work both on or off-site and could also be placed in an internship or co-op learning arrangement.

Chi said he fears not having enough time to raise the needed funds to keep his spot at the school. He's launched a crowd-funding page in hopes of raising $30,000. To date, about $1,100 has been contributed.

"When I'm in school I can't really work a lot," he said. "It's not a lot of time to raise tens of thousands of dollars.... If I go back to Korea I'll be forced to speak Korean.... The whole point of coming to Canada was to learn English and if I go back, I won't have the chance."

Fundraising

For a link to Aiden Chi's fundraising page, head to metronews.ca/calgary

Drug use stable among armed forces: Report

4,198 participants. Pot remains the drug of choice while cocaine is gaining popularity

Marijuana remains the drug of choice for members of the Canadian army, internal drug tests reveal. GETTY IMAGES

Marijuana remains the drug of choice for members of the Canadian army, based on the Force's latest blind drug testing report that also found cocaine is gaining popularity among some members.

The report, done between Jan. 1 and Dec. 31, 2013, found the overall drug consumption rate has been relatively stable since 2010 but suggested young, non-commissioned members were more prone to do drugs.

The findings, contained in a 42-page report obtained by The Canadian Press under the Access to Information Act, included testing for 11 controlled substances at 26 Armed Forces units across the country.

There were 4,198 participants from most ranks and age groups. The testing found that 279 urine specimens — or 6.6 per cent — tested positive for at least one drug, with pot detected in 5.3 per cent of all of the samples.

That's up from the 4.2 per cent in 2012 and 4.8 per cent the year before that.

Positive test results for marijuana came from 19 units, with the bulk from 3 Royal Canadian Regiment and 2 Service Battalion in Petawawa, Ont.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

No disciplinary action

The Canadian Forces has a zero-tolerance policy for illicit drugs and conducts testing to gather data. The results are not used for disciplinary purposes "as no urine sample can be attributed to a specific (forces) member," a spokeswoman said.

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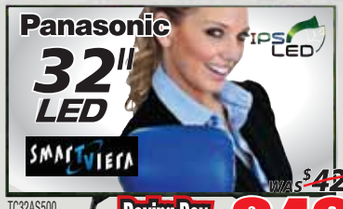

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Washington. U.S. reviews North Korea's terror status

U.S. President Barack Obama.
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS FILE

President Barack Obama says the United States is reviewing whether to put North Korea back on its list of state sponsors of terrorism as Washington decides how to respond to what he calls an "act of cybervandalism," not one of war, against a movie company.

Sony Pictures Entertainment said it cancelled the theatrical release of The Interview after distributors refused to show it. The comedy involves a plot to assassinate North Korea's leader.

David Boies, a Sony lawyer, said The Interview is "going to be distributed, and what Sony has been trying to do is to get the picture out to the public," while protecting the rights of company employers and moviegoers. Boies said theatres "quite understandably" decided not to show the film as scheduled because of the threats. "You can't release a movie unless you have a distribution channel," he said.

North Korea has denied hacking the studio, and on Saturday proposed a joint investigation with the U.S. to determine the true culprit. The White House rejected the idea and said it was confident North Korea was responsible.

Obama is promising to respond. "We're not going to be intimidated by some cyberhackers," he said.

The president said the U.S. would examine the facts to determine whether North Korea should land back on the terrorism sponsors list.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Pakistan. Arrests made in Taliban school carnage

Authorities made several arrests in the case of the Taliban school attack that killed 148 in the northwestern city of Peshawar, on Sunday, officials said.

"Quite a few suspects who were facilitators in one way or the other have been taken into custody," Interior Minister Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan said, adding that the interrogations were "moving ahead in a positive manner." He did not disclose their identities or say how many they were.

Seven Taliban gunmen wearing explosives belts stunned the world on Tuesday by storming into the military run school and slaughtering 148 people, including 132 students. Another nearly 121 students were wounded in the ensuing eight-hour siege of the school, located in an area where many military families live.

The group claims it fights to establish a ruling system based on its own harsh brand of Islam. It has killed thousands over nearly a decade.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

N.Y. cop killer had a criminal history

Brooklyn. Officers Rafael Ramos and Wenjian Liu were gunned down at close range in their patrol car

New York City Police Commissioner Bill Bratton leaves flowers at an impromptu memorial near the site where two police officers were killed in the Brooklyn borough of New York, Sunday. SETH WENIG/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

The gunman who fatally ambushed two police officers in their squad car had a long criminal record, a hatred for police and the government, and an apparent history of mental instability that included an attempt to hang himself a year ago, authorities said Sunday.

Moments before opening fire, Ismaaiyl Brinsley approached people on the street in Brooklyn and asked them to follow him on Instagram, then told them, "Watch what I'm going to do," Chief of Detectives Robert Boyce said.

A portrait of the Brooklyn-born gunman emerged as big-city police departments and union leaders around the U.S. warned officers to change their routines and insist on extra backup a day after Brinsley carried out what he portrayed online as retaliation for the slayings of black men at the hands of white police officers.

Brinsley was black; the slain officers were Asian and Hispanic.

The slayings come at a tense time. Police nationwide have been criticized for months for their tactics, following Eric Garner's death in a New York officer's chokehold and Michael Brown's fatal shooting in Ferguson, Missouri. Protests erupted in recent weeks after grand juries declined to charge the white officers involved.

Investigators were trying to determine if Brinsley had taken part in any protests over the deaths of Brown and Garner, whose names he invoked in his online threat, or simply latched on to the cause for the final act in a violent rampage.

They said he travelled frequently between the South and New York, where he fathered a child in Brooklyn, and had been in the city earlier in the week.

Brinsley, 28, had at least 19 arrests in Georgia and Ohio, spent two years in prison for gun possession and had a troubled childhood so violent that his mother was afraid of him, police said.

On Saturday afternoon, Brinsley approached a squad car from behind in Brooklyn's Bedford-Stuyvesant neighbourhood and fired four shots, killing Officers Rafael Ramos and Wenjian Liu. He then ran into a subway station and committed suicide.

Hours earlier, Brinsley had shot and wounded his ex-girlfriend at her home outside Baltimore, then made threatening posts online, including a vow to put "wings on pigs" and references to the Brown and Garner cases. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

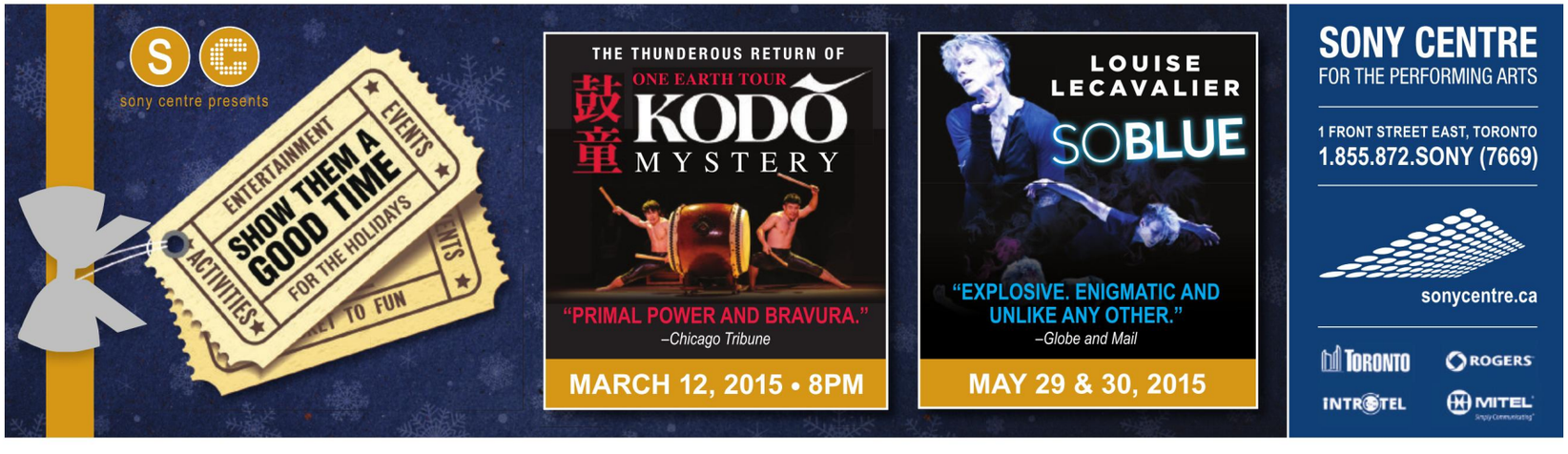
Florida

Officer killed

A police officer was shot and killed early Sunday in the Florida town of Tarpon Springs, authorities said.

The Pinellas County Sheriff's Office said in a statement that police have arrested 23-year-old Marco Antonio Parilla Jr. on suspicion of first-degree murder.

The Tarpon Springs Police Department identified the slain officer as 45-year-old Charles Kondek, a 17-year veteran of the local police department. Originally from New York, Kondek had previously served in the New York City Police Department for more than five years, authorities said. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS



In this May 11 file photo, a soldier and government officials inspect the bridge that links Nigeria and Cameroon after an attacked by Islamic militants. JOSSY OLA/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS FILE

Boko Haram stages cross-border attacks and recruitment

Nigeria. Neighbouring countries worry about extremist group's threat

Thousands of members of Nigeria's home-grown Islamic extremist Boko Haram group strike across the border in Cameroon, with co-ordinated attacks on border towns, a troop convoy and a major barracks.

Farther north, Boko Haram employs recruits from Chad to enforce its control in northeastern Nigerian towns and cities.

In Niger, the government has declared a "humanitarian crisis" and appealed for international aid to help tens of thousands of Nigerian refugees driven from their homes by the insurgency.

These recent events show how neighbouring countries are being drawn increasingly into Nigeria's Islamic uprising.

Thousands of people have been killed in Nigeria's five-year insurgency and some 1.6 million people driven from their homes.

"We are concerned about the increasing regionalization of Boko Haram," said Comfort Ero, Africa director for the International Crisis Group.

On Sunday, Cameroon's army announced it had broken up a Boko Haram training camp in the Mayo-Danay district in the country's north.

Ero cautioned that co-operation between the neighbouring countries is weak.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

'Our religious duty'

Video shows civilians being killed

A new video from Nigeria's home-grown Boko Haram extremists shows gunmen mowing down civilians lying face-down in a dorm, and a leader saying they are being killed because they are "infidels." There are so many corpses the gunmen have difficulty stepping to reach bodies still twitching. Most appear to be adult men. "From now, killing, slaughtering, destructions and bombing will be our religious duty," the leader says. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Kurdish fighters push into north Iraqi town of Sinjar

Backed by U.S.-led coalition airstrikes, Kurdish fighters pushed into the contested northern Iraqi town of Sinjar on Sunday, touching off heavy clashes with Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) militants who have controlled the area for months.

The battle for Sinjar and the surrounding areas has become the latest focus in the campaign to take back territory lost to ISIL during the militants' summer blitz that captured much of northern and western Iraq. ISIL also controls a large chunk of neighbouring Syria.

Last week, Iraqi Kurdish peshmerga fighters launched the operation to retake Sinjar, and opened up a passageway to Mount Sinjar, which overlooks the town. That push allowed some of the thousands of Yazidis trapped on the mountain following the town's fall in August to evacuate.

On Sunday, loud explosions and intense gun battles were heard from inside the town as coalition aircraft bombed ISIL militants.

The president of the self-ruled northern Kurdish region, Masoud Bazani, toured Kurdish positions on Mount Sinjar, where he vowed to defeat ISIL.

"Most of the districts are under our control," Barzani told peshmerga troops. "We will crush the Islamic State," he added, using another term for the militant group.

At least 15 Kurdish fighters wounded in Sunday's clashes were brought from the front-lines to a mountain clinic. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Battles ongoing

The spokesman for the Kurdish forces, Jabbar Yawar, said the fighters were still facing resistance from pockets of ISIL militants still inside the town and that it is "far from cleared."

- Iraqi forces launched an offensive Saturday to retake the airport near the town of Tal Afar.

Iraqi Kurd forces head to battle Islamic militants, Sunday. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Romanians 'like' new president and his vow to fight corruption

Klaus Iohannis. The former mayor got almost 1.3 million likes on Facebook after a surprising runoff win

Romania's Parliament swore in a former mayor as the country's new president, following an election he called a triumph for democracy 25 years after communism rule ended in his country.

Pro-Western Klaus Iohannis, 55, promises a different style from combative outgoing leader Traian Basescu, who left office Sunday having served a maximum 10 years.

Iohannis also vowed to fight corruption and build "a powerful nation," as he took an oath Sunday before Parliament, then headed to the presidential palace to formally take over from Basescu.

"Mentalities must be changed," he told lawmakers and dignitaries. "I want a Romania where there is no place for putting on a show" in politics.

He surprisingly defeated Prime Minister Victor Ponta in the Nov. 16 runoff, tapping into anger from thousands of overseas voters who were unable to vote in the first round. Iohannis received hundreds of thousands of votes from Romanians who work abroad which he called "a triumph for democracy."

His victory sent a feel-good message through the nation of 19 million and he notched up just almost 1.3 million likes on Facebook.

Atypical for Romanian politics, the slow-speaking ethnic German mayor of Sibiu refuses to participate in bitter personal attacks.

He promises good relations with the U.S., the European Union and particularly Germany.

Basescu was credited with a commitment to the anti-corruption fight and has a strong pro-U.S. stance. The U.S. will open a missile defence base in southern Romania, which has angered Russia.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Close ties with U.S.

- Romania was suspected of hosting a CIA secret prison, an allegation that it has denied.
- The U.S. will open a missile defence base in southern Romania, which has angered Russia.

A young woman poses Sunday inside a symbolic revolutionary Romanian flag, with the communist crest removed, during a re-enactment of the 1989 uprising in Bucharest, Romania. VADIM GHIRDA/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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Families urged to hold safe funerals

The radio announcement is chilling and blunt: "If I die, I want the deaths to stop with me."

Dr. Desmond Williams continues: "I want to give my family the permission to request a safe and dignified, medical burial for me."

The announcement is part of a campaign to urge Sierra Leoneans to abandon traditional burial practices, such as relatives touching or washing the dead bodies, that are fuelling the spread of Ebola in the West African country.

Ebola has killed more than 2,000 people in Sierra Leone, and unsafe burials may be responsible for up to 70 per cent of new infections, say experts.

Officials are resorting to increasingly desperate measures to clamp down on traditional burials in Sierra Leone, where Ebola is now spreading fastest. The head of the Ebola response has even threatened to jail people who prepare the corpses of their loved ones.

Williams, a Sierra Leonean-American doctor who works for the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, took to the airwaves last month to encourage people to avoid dangerous burial practices. Now similar pledges have been made by prominent Sierra Leoneans, including pop stars and radio DJs.

But old ways are hard to break. Many believe a traditional burial is necessary to make sure the dead don't return to haunt the living. Funerals are important social occasions in the three most-affected countries, Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea. People often travel great distances to attend and bodies are typically washed and dressed by relatives or friends.

Unfortunately, these practices are the perfect breeding ground for Ebola: The bodies of Ebola victims can be up to 10 times more infectious than those of people living with the disease, according to the International Federation of the Red Cross. A well-attended funeral provides the opportunity for the disease to disperse into a crowd and then be carried long distances back to their homes, says Rebecca Bunnell, a behavioural epidemiologist with the CDC.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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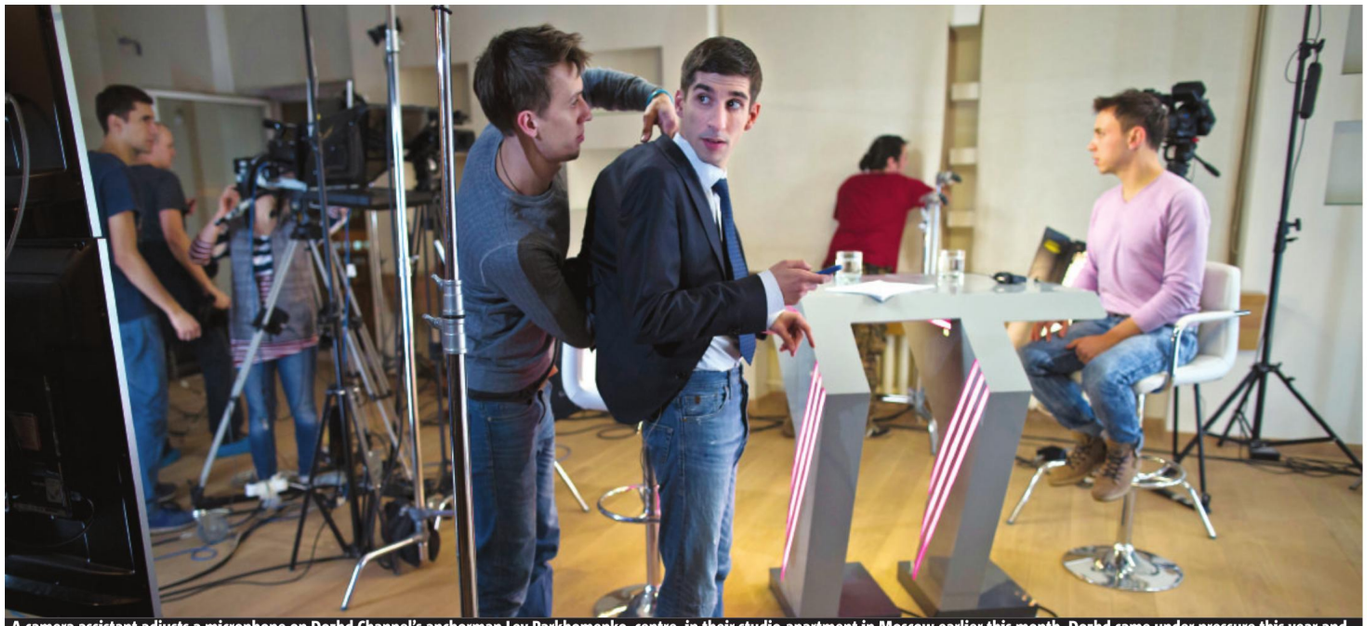

A camera assistant adjusts a microphone on Dozhd Channel's anchorman Lev Parkhomenko, centre, in their studio-apartment in Moscow earlier this month. Dozhd came under pressure this year and while the government was careful not to shut it down, a Kremlin-instigated smear campaign is causing a slow demise of this rare independent broadcaster. ALEXANDER ZEMLIANICHENKO/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Live from a Moscow apartment: Independent Russian newscasts

Dozhd. News channel came under pressure as the Kremlin sought to unify the country behind the annexation of Crimea and the Ukraine affair

Among the five TV journalists interviewing Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev, the odd one out was easy to spot. Mikhail Zygar's questions were sharper than those of the others, who headed back to spacious television studios while Zygar broadcast his piece from a Moscow living room.

The Dozhd news channel, whose editor-in-chief Zygar was given a Committee to Protect Journalists award last month, rose to prominence in 2011 with its coverage of the mass protests against Vladimir Putin, who was then prime minister but preparing to return to the presidency. State-owned television largely ignored the protests.

As other Russian television channels have grown increasingly subservient this year, providing propaganda backing for the annexation of the Crimean Peninsula and Russia's aggressive policy toward Ukraine, Dozhd didn't follow the lead — and is now paying for it.

Putin's government has been careful not to order the channel to shut down, but a Kremlin-instigated smear campaign has driven this rare independent broadcaster to the brink of demise. Past strollers and bicycles in the hall, a Soviet-era apartment in central Moscow now houses the studio of Dozhd, whose combined online and TV audience is about 12 million.

Since its inception in 2010, Dozhd had its studio in a former chocolate factory on the Moskva River, but its landlord broke the lease in November, forcing the channel to look for new space. Sympathizers offered Dozhd a place elsewhere, but last week they were told they can't broadcast out of there any more.

Dozhd doesn't want to make public its new temporary location.

During Putin's 15 years in power, the Russian television landscape has been sanitized to the point where news coverage on all channels is almost identical.

State channels toe the Kremlin line and private channels, most of which are owned by Kremlin-friendly oligarchs or state-controlled conglomerates like Gazprom, are just as obedient.

Russia was ranked 148th out of the 180-country press freedom index by Reporters Without Borders this year, sandwiched between Malaysia and the Philippines. But Russians themselves are not protesting on the streets to defend media freedoms.

Journalists at Dozhd admit the state propaganda is taking its toll, convincing Russians to believe in the supremacy of national interests. But the country's shrinking economy and decline in living standards — the ruble has lost around half its value since January — could change that. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Beginning of the end

Dozhd's troubles began when it began aggressively covering the daily anti-government protests in Ukraine, which state-owned television dismissed as a neo-Nazi coup.

- The crackdown came at the end of January, when Dozhd hosted a history program on the 1941-44 Siege of Leningrad and put a question up for a vote: Would it have been worth it to surrender Leningrad to save lives?
- The question caused a stir for its implication of a lack of patriotism, prompting Kremlin officials to call for a shutdown of the channel. Dozhd apologized, but that didn't seem to help.
- Putin's spokesman, Dmitry Peskov, accused Dozhd of "crossing a moral and ethical red line," while the State Duma condemned the channel for "neo-Nazism" and "betraying your own people."
- Nearly all cable networks dropped Dozhd in a matter of days, and since then the channel has been treated like a leper.
- Problems multiplied in summer, when the Russian parliament passed a bill that barred cable channels from running ads, according to Natalya Sindeyeva, who has led Dozhd since its interception. The channel cut its expenses in half, shed about 30 per cent of its staff and reduced its monthly budget to 20 million rubles ($357,000) — just a fraction of any state TV budget — before being hit with the eviction notice.

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Saudi Arabia. Low oil prices not a 'conspiracy'

Saudi Arabia's oil chief on Sunday dismissed allegations that his kingdom conspired to bring down oil prices in order to harm other countries and told a summit of Arab energy leaders that he was confident the market would stabilize.

The kingdom, which is dependent on oil revenues, is able to weather lower oil prices due to large reserves built up over the years. Non-OPEC member Russia and other nations like Iraq, Iran and Venezuela need prices substantially above present levels to meet budget goals and want to drive prices up.

Saudi Arabia maintains it is opposed to cutting production because of fears its market share could erode.

"The best thing for everybody is to let the most efficient produce," Saudi Petroleum Minister Ali Naimi said in the United Arab Emirates capital of Abu Dhabi.

He was addressing the Arab Energy Conference, a gathering held every four years.

Price

$60

The price of U.S. crude has dipped below $60 US a barrel, its lowest in five years

The price of U.S. crude has dipped below $60 US a barrel, its lowest in five years. Naimi said he was certain that the oil market would recover with the improvement of the global economy.

An OPEC meeting last month failed to agree on production cuts, mainly because of Saudi opposition to curb its own exports. OPEC controls about 40 per cent of the world oil market and Saudi Arabia is the cartel's largest producer.

Naimi said that "a lack of co-operation by non-OPEC production nations, along with the spread of misinformation and speculator's greed" have contributed to the drop in prices.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Luxury retailers head north of 49th parallel

Shopping. The entrance of high-end American department store chains have got Canadian rivals on the defensive

With the arrival of Nordstrom north of the border in Calgary and Saks Fifth Avenue waiting in the wings, the U.S. department stores are joining an increasingly crowded field of players banking on Canadian fans of high-end goods to spread the love — and wealth — to their shops.

Homegrown brands are bracing for the influx of fresh competition by shoring up or bolstering their operations.

Luxury menswear retailer Harry Rosen has enlarged four of its existing locations and has three major stores opening in 2015, said chairman and CEO Larry Rosen.

"It became obvious to us two, three, four years ago there was going to be an American invasion in our segment of retail, that a number of department stores were going to come here, and we obviously sat back to develop a strategy," Rosen said in an interview.

"When we sat back and we thought about it, we realized that we could turn an increasingly competitive situation into a positive — into a competitive strength."

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Canada's retail market has got a lot more competitive with the entrance of U.S. retailers, like Saks. RICHARD DREW/THE CANADIAN PRESS/AP

Canadian sensibility

Brynn Winegard, a marketing expert with Winegard & Company, says Canadians tend to be more value-conscious and less price-sensitive than Americans.

- "We are a lot more accepting of higher prices if we believe the value is there. And our economy is one that is padded enough that our consumers, our people, stay fairly affluent through the business cycle," she said.

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BlackBerry is on the comeback trail

Waterloo, Ont.
CEO John Chen is guiding the Canadian tech company back from a zero to hero

BlackBerry is hoping not only to return to the hearts and minds of smartphone users but also, starting next year, to get into their cars and homes, too.

With its finances slowly improving, plans are being made for the Waterloo, Ont.-based company to become a bigger player in the Internet of Things movement, which links your phone with various other technology, from your fridge to your television.

The project has been in development for several years at BlackBerry, and chief executive John Chen said Friday that a "roadmap" for his plans will be laid out in early January at the Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas.

BlackBerry CEO John Chen
BEBETO MATTHEWS/THE CANADIAN PRESS/AP

"Our focus right now is on connected cars, and it will get into connected homes — these things are inseparable," Chen said during a recent meeting with reporters at the company's headquarters.

"Everything we do fits together."

Still in its infancy, the connected home is the next evolution in technology as more people link their smartwatches with their laptops, and their phones to their Bluetooth speakers.

BlackBerry is trying to get ahead of the curve by developing security software that can be licensed to companies that want their products ready for the growing popularity of machine-to-machine communication.

Coming up with innovative ideas would have been almost unheard of a year ago when the future of BlackBerry was tenuous, at best. The company was drowning in problems and its finances were declining at an alarming speed, with quarterly losses that soared into the billions.

When Chen swooped into the leadership role in late 2013 he immediately launched a rescue effort, a strategy that has partly relied on thinking of new ways to sell the company's older technology, while it worked behind the scenes on fresh ideas. THE CANADIAN PRESS

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VOICES

WANTED: A WATERFRONT VISION

All Metro columnist Matt Elliott wants for Christmas is to know where our mayor stands on the waterfront — because its future hasn't been this uncertain since that time Doug Ford championed the lakeside Ferris wheel

TORY'S TORONTO
Matt Elliott

Mayor John Tory doesn't look a thing like Santa, but I'm going to ask him for a Christmas gift anyway.

I'd like to know what his vision is for Toronto's waterfront.

That's not too much to ask, I don't think. After all, issues relating to the waterfront will loom large over the next year.

There will be more debate over expansion of the island airport. There will be more talk about Tory's SmartTrack plan, which leans heavily on a Canary Wharf-style development on the side of the Don River.

And there will be continued hand-wringing over the future of the Gardiner Expressway, our ever-expensive lakeside highway.

Involved in all these discussions will be Waterfront Toronto, the public agency supported by all three levels of government.

They've spent the last decade cleaning up contaminated soil, building public spaces and spurring $3.2-billion in economic output and $622-million in government revenues, according to an economic analysis published in 2013.

They now want to move on to their next phase.

But when he was asked by reporters last week if he supported Waterfront Toronto's continued existence, Tory was cagey. And his actions since he took office earlier this month have given waterfront advocates reason to wonder what the mayor really wants to see happen along the water's edge.

These concerns started with Tory's appointing Deputy Mayor Denzil Minnan-Wong to the Waterfront Toronto Board of Directors. Minnan-Wong has been a regular critic of the agency, to the point where you can now go online and find several pictures of him glaring at Waterfront Toronto-commissioned infrastructure he believes cost too much money.

Things escalated further after Waterfront Toronto publicly disclosed a budget overrun on the Queen's Quay revitalization project. Though the news didn't come with a request for additional government funds and they don't have a history of blowing budgets, Tory took the opportunity to chide the agency for its management of the project.

And OK, sure, cost overruns are never good, but Tory's words and actions so far are enough to make me wonder if he sees some kind of better alternative to the current arrangement for waterfront development.

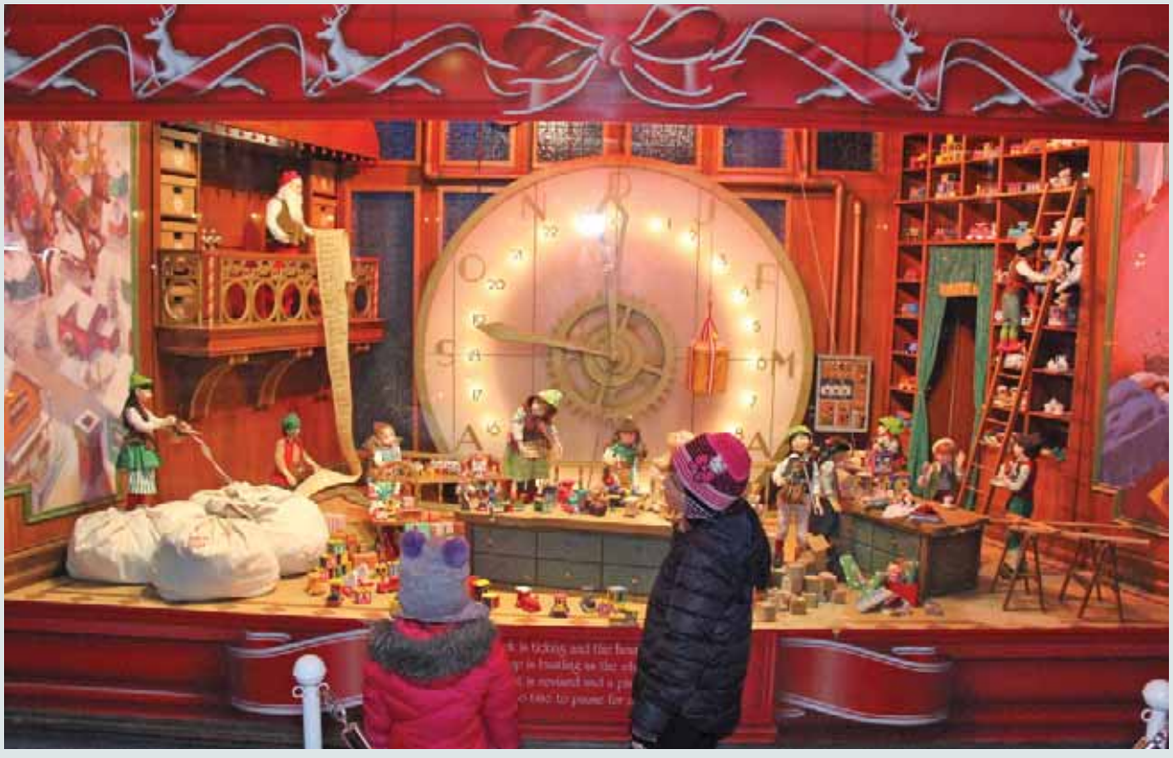
That brings me back to my Christmas wish.

Maybe it's been inadvertent, but Tory has created a level of uncertainty when it comes to the future of the city's waterfront, the likes of which we haven't seen since Doug Ford once mused about building a lakeside Ferris wheel.

To fix that, Tory should put all of his waterfront-related cards on the table. How does he want the city's waterfront to develop? Who does he want to see doing the work? And when does he want to see it done?

In other words: What's the new mayor's waterfront vision? This Christmas, that's all I'm asking for.

Your Toronto



Window into Santaland

People crowd around the holiday display in a Hudson's Bay window along Queen Street West. Various miniature scenes, ranging from Santa's workshop to yuletide carolers, are being played out in a block of windows stretching from Bay to Yonge streets. They'll be in place through early 2015.
DAVID VAN DYKE/METRO

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Upcoming

Ho-ho-holiday break

Feeling pre-Christmas burnout? Maybe you're a bit Holidazed & Confused? That's the title of a show just launched at The Second City (51 Mercer St.), and everyone's promising it's just the hilarious break you need to catch a second wave of holiday cheer. Taking stabs at all the obligations, stress and ritual that comes with all this fa-la-la-la-laing, the show runs through Dec. 31. Check secondcity.com for details.
ANGELA MULLINS/METRO

Zoo-per opportunity

The Toronto Zoo is throwing open its doors on Boxing Day for a special tour of its freshly overhauled Eurasia Wilds area. The tour starts from the front entrance at 10:30 a.m., and half-price admission is being offered for the day. People are being asked to bring a donation for the Daily Bread Food Bank. **ANGELA MULLINS/METRO**

Holiday feast for homeless people

Biagio Ristorante on King Street East will serve its annual holiday meal for the homeless on Sunday. The feast has been an annual tradition since 1996. In 2013, Owner Biagio Vinci was given a 51 Division Community Police Liaison Committee Hero Award for serving thousands of meals to those in need over the years. The restaurants doors open at 11 a.m. The food will be the same calibre as that served to paying customers at the upscale Italian restaurant.
JESSICA SMITH CROSS/METRO

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Gossip

NED EHRBAR

METRO'S TAKE ON THE WORLD OF CELEBRITIES

Iggy Azalea ALL PHOTOS: GETTY IMAGES

Hackers threaten exposé if Azalea doesn't end Banks feud

We're apparently officially in the age of hacker demands, as those loveable upstarts in Anonymous — the ones with the Guy Fawkes masks and all — have jumped into Iggy Azalea's feud with Azalea Banks, demanding that Azalea make a big public apology to Banks and the #ICantBreathe protesters or suffer the consequences. Just what consequences, you might ask?

The group claims to have a sex tape featuring the singer and are threatening to release stills from it if she does not comply. Way to raise the debate, guys.

They went on to threaten, "We have so much s— on you, your scandal would be bigger than Bill Cosby's," which seems kind of impossible just purely on a fame level. Unless there's millions of people out there who think of Azalea as a paragon of wholesomeness and morality that I don't know about.

Last week, Azalea launched a new volley in her ongoing feud with Banks, calling her "a bigot" and "a miserable, angry human being" on Twitter. Fun times.

From Ross to a Kardashian! Schwimmer returns to TV

David Schwimmer

Would you believe that Friends star David Schwimmer hasn't had a TV project since the hit sitcom ended 10 years ago? I mean, sure he's done guest spots on 30 Rock and Lisa Kudrow's Web Therapy, but a regular gig? Nope. So what could lure Schwimmer, who's been sticking to film as an actor and a director, back to TV? Apparently the chance to play Kim Kardashian's dad. Schwimmer has signed on to play Robert Kardashian in Ryan Murphy's miniseries about the O.J. Simpson trial, American Crime Story. So welcome back, Dave.

Life not so Marvel-ous for oh-so-grown-up Corden

Into the Woods star James Corden is one busy man. While he already has a thriving film, television and theatre career — and a young family at home — he's also taking over for Craig Ferguson at The Late Late Show next year. So he obviously doesn't have time consider a role in one of Marvel's big superhero movies. Which is fine, since he wouldn't want one, anyway. "I don't think I'm talking myself out of a big Marvel franchise," he tells Metro. "If you're an actor and you're in those movies, what is your day's acting? I find it strange."

Also, for any grown-up fans of Marvel movies, Corden thinks you need to grow up. "I spend almost no time thinking about The Avengers. I literally could not spend less of my day thinking about it, and I'm constantly amazed by the volume of adults who do," he says. "Each to their own, and I wish them well, but I mean, it's preposterous."

James Corden

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Franco my dear, The Interview is worth a damn

Review. Ballsy James Franco's killer instincts carry mockingly good flick yanked by Sony

MATT PRIGGE
Metro in New York

James Franco and Seth Rogen in The Interview. CONTRIBUTED

Yes, there have been terrorist threats over a Seth Rogen movie with a Guinness-level number of anus jokes. The Interview — a very filthy comedy about the attempted assassination of North Korean despot Kim Jong-un — has had its release cancelled for fears of threats on theatres showing it — a lot of brouhaha over a very silly film, one with a peerlessly silly James Franco turn and lots and lots of Katy Perry. As satires go, this isn't Dr. Strangelove, even if it ends in a ballsier cinematic act of war. It's a bunch of clowns seeing how far they can go in mocking the humourless, just to see what will happen. How could they have known the battle line was basically nonexistent?

The Interview isn't even the first movie to take out a North Korean leader. The world survived Team America, which turned a puppet Kim Jong-il into a cockroach. Here, his tyrannical, babyfaced son (Randall Park) becomes the target of CIA lust after he agrees to a chat with Franco's David Skylark, a lowest common denominator infotainment god. Before he and his producer, Aaron (Rogen, who also co-directed), leave for the dictatorship, they agree — without really fully understanding the gravity of their situation — to perform a covert form of poisoning.

The funny thing about North Korea — or sympathizers, or whatever the hell the rogue hacker team known as Guardians of Peace are — getting up in arms over The Interview is that Park's Kim winds up being unexpectedly semi-sympathetic. Meekly introducing himself to Franco's Skylark, Kim's a superfan who blurts out how nervous he is to meet one of his favourite TV stars. He can't hide his obsession with American junk culture, including reciting Perry's Wide Awake while in tears, or keep from detailing the mental abuse laid on him by his late father. He and Skylark bond over being despised by those who view them as dangerous for culture — and, in Kim's case, the human race.

There are more twists to come, some not so charitable toward its real-life monster. But The Interview grants Kim more humanity than the news ever has, all the while never holding back on exposing (well, mocking) the grim realities of life above South Korea. Everything's building to a Frost/Nixon-style tête-à-tête that spills over into an outsized action climax. Rogen and company's glee in going really far is apparent; you can see them bowling over the first time they saw the crazy things they come up with materialize on-screen.

It's all a joke, if one that evidently doesn't go over well when described to humorless political leaders. And yet the funniest part isn't its cajones, or even that a film about idiots attempting a political killing is a dumb comedy that may have sparked an international incident. It's Franco. When he tries to be funny Franco's really, really funny. Skylark is a super-manchild, one caught in a cycle of childlike euphoria, insecurity and betrayal. His bromance with Kim Jong-un may be the most intense movie relationship of the year, and of course one that fiddles winkingly with the real-life questioning of the star's sexuality. The Interview isn't worth dying for, but more contraband needs someone calling John Kerry an "oak tree-looking f—."

Review

The Interview

Directors. Seth Rogen and Evan Goldberg

Stars. James Franco, Seth Rogen

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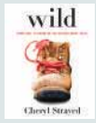

Strayed's skillfully described account of her 2,663 mile wilderness trek along the Californian coast is a proper journey, full of interesting characters and self-made calamity, one that captures the adventurous landscape enough to transport you to her side. What begins as a dubious act of personal growth does indeed lead to a sophisticated and compelling life lesson by the journey's end.

App

Deck Charlie Brown's tree

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Help Charlie Brown and friends decorate the little tree using ornaments, toppers, stands, and wraps inspired by the 1965 animated special. A holiday photo booth lets you share the results.

Video game

Name. Little Big Planet 3

For. PS3/PS4

Rated. Everyone

It's the new gadgets — a gun that fires teleporter bullets and a fan that pulls and blows structures — that introduce fresh possibilities and make this third outing a compelling challenge all over again. Hugh Laurie joins Stephen Fry to maintain the game's affable banter.

Vine superstars hope first film will top their six-second best

Social media. Nash Grier and Cameron Dallas bank on Vine fans flocking to feature-length Expelled

You know Vine, that video-based social network where users upload six-second clips for the world to enjoy? Well, you might not have noticed, but it's become hugely popular. In fact, two of its biggest stars, Cameron Dallas and Marcus Johns, have done so well that they're now looking to parlay that success to their first feature film, Expelled. Dallas and Johns are hoping that their combined 11.9 million Vine followers — yes, you read that right — will come along for the ride. But that doesn't mean that they've given up on the format that launched them in the first place.

Nash Grier and Cameron Dallas. GETTY IMAGES

"It's really short and punchy, for people that don't have long attention spans," Dallas says of Vine. "Like for me, I can just sit there and watch little six-second clips all day. But for me to go watch a show and then watch commercials and stuff like that? I'd rather watch Vine than TV."

Expelled is basically a Ferris Bueller for the YouTube generation, with notorious prankster Felix (Dallas) trying to keep his parents in the dark about the fact that he's been kicked out of school. And it leaves plenty of opportunity for Dallas and Johns to goof off and make a case for themselves as film stars. It also serves as an early testing ground for whether the new wave of social media stars — who are hugely popular with young viewers — can translate their YouTube, Vine and Instagram success into more traditional venues.

"It was very challenging to go from six seconds to a full-length, but we put a lot of hard work in and we did it," Dallas says of the film. "And also, for a Vine you're doing the whole shebang. You're the actor, director, you do everything. It was really fun for me to take the direction of what the director wanted and try and portray that."

Expelled is available on iTunes and Amazon. **NED EHRBAR/ METRO IN HOLLYWOOD**

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Veteran Nintendo game designer is all smiles

Gaming. After some slow years, Nintendo is turning heads with their amiibo interactive toy line

Shigeru Miyamoto seems giddy — and with good reason.

The veteran Nintendo designer behind such landmark video-game franchises as Mario Bros. and Donkey Kong is happy that after three years of sluggish sales for Nintendo's touch-screen-centred Wii U console, the Kyoto, Japan-based gaming giant is bouncing back, just like the famous springy plumber dreamed up 33 years ago by Miyamoto.

With the recent popularity of Super Smash Bros. and Mario Kart 8, as well as the successful launch of the amiibo interactive toy figure line, Miyamoto has a few reasons to smile.

Over a cup of coffee, Miyamoto — as translated by Nintendo product marketing director Bill Trinen — discussed the possibilities for amiibo, the latest instalment of The Legend of Zelda and the future of the Mario franchise.

It sounds like amiibo has been a success since it launched with Smash Bros. You've announced that amiibo will be compatible with upcoming games like Mario Party 10 and Yoshi's Woolly World, but how else do you see the figures being utilized in the future?

We'll continue to make future games that will have functionality with the amiibo characters as an additional present for people who bought them. Beyond that, we're looking at how we can use the amiibo functionality in the future, including cards and whatnot.

If you discontinue certain amiibo figures, will you continue to include them digitally in future games?

We're not making promises for certain figures, but the way amiibo is designed is that certain games can have amiibo specifically for that game. Other games can take advantage of past amiibo that developers want to make their game compatible with. In the future, we have the option, if certain amiibo figures are no longer available in stores, to release an amiibo in card form with the same functionality.

Quoted

"People come to us on a fairly regular basis about creating Mario movies."

Shigeru Miyamoto, Mario Bros. designer

You recently previewed gameplay footage from next year's Zelda instalment. What's your strategy for Zelda on the Wii U?

One of the main things we wanted to do was go back to the open-world concept of the original Zelda games and design with that in mind. That's really the direction the team is going in. This time, we've brought back Link's horse, Epona, and his bow and arrow, but what we've decided, which is really fun, is being able to freely walk around in this world and choose what you want to do and how you want to explore. I can't talk much about it, but one of the things we're working on right now is that, as you play, the world will change and be affected by what you choose to do.

There was correspondence that came out of the Sony leak that mentioned Spider-Man producer Avi Arad was working on a Mario Bros. animated film. Is that true? If so, what would your role be in the film, and how do you envision a modern Mario film would look like?

I heard something about that. What's interesting is that over the past 20 years, people come to us on a fairly regular basis about creating Mario movies. There are times that those ideas end right when they bring them to us, and other times we'll listen to presentations. It's not very unusual, and it's something we've been doing for a very long time. I don't particularly have a vision that the next iteration of Mario is going to be in film.

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Shigeru Miyamoto is riding high on the recent success of Super Smash Bros. and Mario Kart 8. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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Expansion. Android tablet users can now indulge in Hearthstone

Hearthstone could be heading to smartphones in 2015. CONTRIBUTED

An incontrovertible success on iPad, the online card game Hearthstone from World of Warcraft studio Blizzard is now available for Android tablets.

Free to play with optional payments for extra material — new adventures and expansion packs, plus access to a competitive arena — the game has been available on Windows PCs, Macs and the iPad format since January, with a full release made in March, and a recent December update pushing it back into iTunes' top grossing charts around the world.

The Android version requires a six-inch display on a device with 1GB of RAM running on Android 4.0 or higher and is being pushed out to players in Australia, Canada and New Zealand via Google Play and the Amazon Appstore with a full international rollout scheduled for "the coming days."

Those who want to play on smaller-screened devices needn't feel left out for too long, as Blizzard is also planning on an early 2015 announcement regarding Android and iPhone phones, even if its arrival is a little later than originally envisaged at Blizzard's annual convention back in November 2013. AFP

The cats of Disneyland

Apparently, cats are roaming wild all over Disneyland. Instagram account Disneylandcats captures the felines who live all over the sprawling Anaheim property. These strays don't look like the homely cats you might find at the dumpster in your town; they look almost as if they're meant to star in a Disney movie themselves. The website connected to the Instagram account estimates that between 100 and 200 cats live at Disneyland. Unfortunately as of right now you can't adopt the adorable cats you see in your feed, but you can learn more about each one on the website, which features cat profiles listing the cat's breed, favourite ride and an interesting fact. With the popularity the account is gaining, the cats might become just as sought after to sight as Goofy and Mickey Mouse. EMILY LAURENCE/METRO

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Music

Madonna GETTY IMAGES

Madonna drops six tracks after leak

In a surprise preview of her new album, Madonna released six songs Saturday on iTunes and various streaming services.

The songs were released because several in-progress demos were leaked earlier this week, publicist Liz Rosenberg said. Madonna said in a statement that she had wanted to wait until a different holiday season. "I was hoping to release my new single Living For Love on Valentine's Day with the rest of the album coming in the spring," she said. The full album, Rebel Heart, is set for release in March.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Taking to Twitter to talk about television

Social media. Behind-the-scenes workers becoming celebrities in their own right by chatting with fans

Sasha Pieterse, left, and showrunner, I. Marlene King, on the set of Pretty Little Liars. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

When a new episode of ABC Family's Pretty Little Liars airs, its showrunner, I. Marlene King, makes a point to go on Twitter to see what the fans have to say.

King is among the newest class of TV celebrities on social media: Showrunners — those people responsible for the day-to-day functioning of a TV show — who are both gaining in followers and who find that social media gives back perhaps even more than they put in.

"I pay enormous attention to it," King said. "I am on social media live every night when the show airs and the next day as well looking at the feedback we got regarding the episode. Yes, I have vision for the show and a creative destination where I know the show is going, but I would be foolish not to take advantage of this wonderful, giant focus group of millions of people we have each week when the show airs."

King said social media has helped validate her decisions about the fate of certain characters on PLL. "I started falling in love with the character of Toby early on in the show," she said. "We were going to follow the books and have his character die early on, but as I started to fall in love with him I noticed fans were really falling in love with him, and together as the show and the fans we decided to keep him."

Showrunner Hart Hanson (Bones, Fox) pays attention to what the fans are saying online, but makes the point that not all of his viewers are using social media.

"The entire audience is not represented by the Twitter follower, especially the verbose and noisy Twitter follower," he said. "If I did what the Twitter followers wanted me to do on my show Bones, (characters) Booth and Brennan would've gotten together in the third episode. That would've been a very bad thing for the series. It's complicated but you have to keep your distance."

Shonda Rhimes has more than 791,000 Twitter followers. The showrunner, whose block of prime-time ABC programming on Thursday nights Grey's Anatomy, Scandal and How to Get Away with Murder has boosted her fame, puts it into perspective with the disclaimer in the bio of her Twitter account: "I make stuff up for a living. Remember, it's not real, OK? Don't tweet me your craziness."

Andrew Adashek, head of TV at Twitter, says fans who follow showrunners can get inside information they wouldn't otherwise have access to via dropped spoilers and hints about upcoming plots. "It's like getting a director's cut of every episode and people love that," Adashek said.

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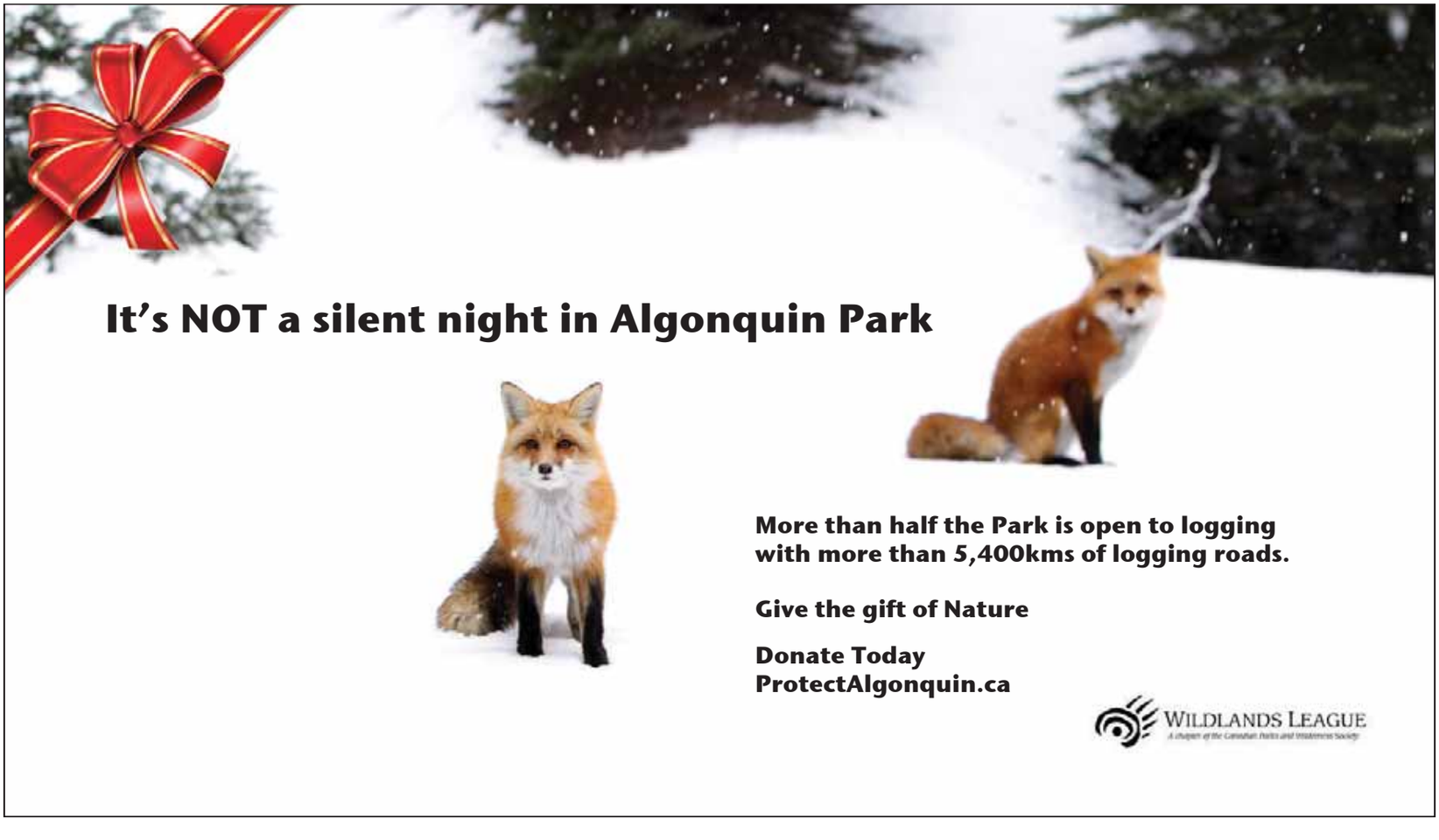
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A good time to smarten up

Money. With another year behind us, this is when you should take stock of your finances and fix whatever isn't working for you

GAIL VAZ-OXLADE
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Is consumer debt killing your budget? Then deal with it! ISTOCK

OK, it's December. Do you have plans to take what you learned this year and do it differently next year?

Y'know what they say: Stupid is doing the same thing over and over and expecting to get a different result. So are you planning to keep being stupid in 2015 or is next year the year you smarten up and take control?

It's easy to ignore the details of our financial lives when everything is rushing past us. And while this month seems like the busiest of all, if you want next year to be a strong, healthy one financially, it's time to stop and take a breath.

What better time to check in on your financial progress than just before the turn of a new year? Although the glow of the holiday season may be bright enough to distract you from past mistakes, living in ignorance of what's worked, or what hasn't, is no way to get off to a fresh start. If you want to make sure you're in control of your money as you head into the new year, take these steps.

1. Do a net worth statement.
Assess how you feel about what you've accomplished financially this year. On a scale of 1 to 10 (10 being ecstatic), how do you feel about where you are? What's the biggest financial concern you have right now? What one thing do you want to accomplish before another year rolls past?

2. Review your budget.
How did the numbers shake out this year, and what should you tweak for next?

Often, as we progress through the year and get comfortable living on a budget, we also get complacent and costs start to rise. Look at your last two months' spending to see if it is still in line with your planning. Is it time to do some trimming? Have prices risen in some areas of your budget, indicating that you need to trim other areas to rebalance? Are there other changes that have taken place since you did your budget that you need to incorporate?

3. You don't have a budget? How's that working for you?
If you're sick and tired of not knowing where your money has been going, it's time to grab a cuppa, a calculator, six months' worth of credit card and bank statements and an Excel spreadsheet. (A pen and pad work, too.) Do the spending analysis. Make a budget.

4. Recalculate your debt level.
If your consumer credit payments are eating up more than 15 per cent of your budget, you've got too much debt.

Some people find it's hard to even imagine being debt-free. But you can be. It may take another job to earn the extra money to get out of debt, but if that's what it takes, you can do it.

Are you on target to be debt-free?

5. Assess your emergency savings.
It takes small steps to get to where you want to be. Having six months' worth of savings for essential expenses socked away isn't a *nice*-to-have, it's a *gotta*-have.

6. Check your retirement plan.
Make sure you're taking advantage of a retirement plan at work and the savings-matching program it may offer. No plan at work? Then you better have an individual retirement savings plan.

Did you meet your savings goal this year? No? Answer me this: How will you eat when it comes time to hang up your work gloves? How will you keep a roof over your head?

If you think your kids are going to take care of you, how would you do right now if your mom and dad showed up on your doorstep?

7. Quantify your investment return.
How are you putting your money to work for you? Are those investment choices you made still working for you?

Are you well diversified? Diversification helps you weather investment volatility because all your money isn't tied up in one sector, type of investment or geographic location.

If your adviser hasn't reviewed your portfolio with you yet this year, get on the horn.

This would be a good time to adjust the investments that may have fallen out of whack with your goals and tolerance for risk.

8. Review your insurance coverage.
Do you have insurance for cars, property, life and disability? If you think insurance is a waste of money, how would you cope if the worst did happen?

How would your family cope? As if a life disaster isn't bad enough, would it be fair to them to be wiped out financially at the same time?

It's easy to put off looking at your money. Put it off. Put it off. Put it off. But you'll get no peace of mind from not knowing where you stand. Better to buckle down and do the detail.

Update your will

- Do you need to review your will this year? How about your powers of attorney for both personal care and money? And have you named a guardian for your children?
- Have you reviewed this documentation in the past two years, or since your last major life change (marriage, divorce, moving, birth of a child)?
- If not, this is a good time to dig out the paperwork and have a look to see if it still meets your needs.

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One cut of meat, three unique flavours

Holiday Roasted Pork Tenderloin. If you have picky eaters at your table, here is a recipe with variations that will please everyone

Though delicious and tender, pork tenderloin also is neutral enough to pair wonderfully with numerous ingredients. It's also easy to cook.

Here are three versions: a tangy butternut squash pesto, a garlic-rich potato purée, and a glaze of cranberries and apple cider. Add some fresh bread and a salad and you've got a great holiday meal that you can repeat multiple times without ever feeling in a rut.

Holiday Roasted Pork Tenderloin

1. Heat the oven to 400 F.

2. Brush or rub olive oil over the surface of each pork tenderloin. Sprinkle each on all sides with salt and pepper. Place the tenderloins in a small roasting pan and roast for 30 minutes, or until the centre of the tenderloins reaches 145 F. Slice and serve topped with one of the variations below.

Butternut Squash Pesto

In a food processor, pulse 2 cups of peeled and cubed butternut squash until the pieces are very finely diced. Stir 1/4 cup olive oil into the squash, then spread the mixture on a foil-lined rimmed baking sheet. Bake at 400 F for 12 to 15 minutes, or until tender, but not mushy. Lift the foil off the pan and place the squash in the freezer to chill for 10 minutes. Once chilled, in a medium bowl stir together the squash, 2 tablespoons lime juice, 1/4 cup chopped fresh cilantro, 1/4 cup chopped fresh basil, 1/4 cup grated manchego cheese, and salt and black pepper, to taste. Spoon over the pork and top with toasted almonds.

Garlic Potato Purée

In a small saucepan over medium heat, combine 1 cup half-and-half with 3 garlic cloves and 2 bay leaves. Cover and simmer for 15 minutes. Meanwhile, in a covered medium saucepan fitted with a steamer basket and filled with 1 inch of water, steam 2 pounds of peeled and cubed russet potatoes for 15 minutes, or until very tender. Pass the potatoes through a food mill or ricer and into a large bowl. Remove the bay leaves from the half-and-half and discard. In a blender, purée the half-and-half with the garlic until completely smooth. Gradually whisk the half-and-half into the potatoes, allowing it to be absorbed before adding more. Whisk in 6 tablespoons butter, then season with salt and black pepper. Sprinkle with chopped fresh thyme, then serve alongside the pork.

Holiday Roasted Pork Tenderloin, shown here in its Garlic Potato Purée variation, serves 8. MATTHEW MEAD/ THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Ingredients

- Two 1-lb pork tenderloins
- Olive oil
- Kosher salt and black pepper

Cranberry Cider Glaze

In a small saucepan over medium-high, combine 2 cups apple cider with 1 cup fresh cranberries. Bring to a simmer and cook, uncovered, until thickened and reduced to 1 cup. Season lightly with salt and pepper. Meanwhile, in an oiled skillet over medium-high heat, cook several slices of prosciutto until crisp. When the pork tenderloin is cooked, serve covered with the glaze and garnished with shards of crisped prosciutto.

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Latest in appetizers: croquettes

1. In pot over high heat, bring rice, broth and saffron to boil, reduce to low and simmer covered 25 minutes until tender.

2. Pulse shrimp 5 to 6 times in a food processor to a chunky paste. Scrape into a large bowl, stir in egg, frozen peas and feta. Mix in hot rice to form a loose but sticky mixture that holds its shape when squeezed.

3. Lay a sheet of plastic wrap on surface. Shape 1 cup (250 ml) of mixture into loose shaped log at one end of plastic wrap. Wrap plastic around log, shaping and rolling into a firm 1 1/2 inch (1 cm) round log. Twist ends in opposing directions to compact log shape. Repeat process two more times with remaining rice mixture. Freeze logs for 1 hour to make firm. Unroll logs and slice into 2 inch (5 cm) long pieces.

4. Using a deep-fry thermometer, heat 2 inches (5 cm) of oil in a large pot to 350 F (180 C), fry 6 to 8 croquettes at a time until golden brown. Keep a lid or foil handy as croquettes will spit and crackle. Fry to a golden brown, about 5 to 7 minutes. Transfer to a paper towel lined tray.

5. Spicy Aioli: In bowl, combine mayonnaise and chili paste. USA RICE FEDERATION, RICEINFO.COM.

This recipe makes about 30 croquettes. RICEINFO.COM

Ingredients

- 1 cup (250 ml) U.S. short grain sushi rice
- 2 cups (500 ml) vegetable broth
- 1/4 tsp (1 ml) saffron
- 1 lb (454 g) small raw shrimp, peeled
- 1 egg, whisked
- 1 cup (250 ml) frozen peas
- 1 cup (250 ml) crumbled low-fat feta
- Vegetable oil for frying

Spicy Aioli

- 1/4 cup (60 ml) low-fat mayo
- 2 tbsp (30 ml) sambal oelek chili paste

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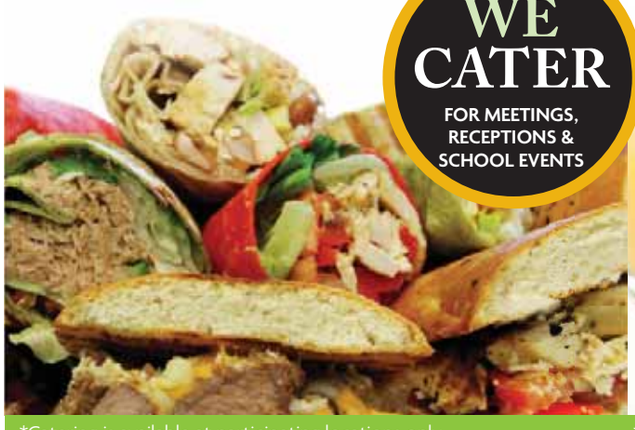

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THIS IS REAL.

Teaching through the eyes of Homer and Bart

Education. University professors are using The Simpsons in the classroom for courses on everything from literature to sociology

Richard Pioreck uses The Simpsons in his English courses. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Bart and Lisa Simpson have been in elementary school for 25 years. But that hasn't stopped them from showing up on college campuses.

Universities across the country are using satirical references from The Simpsons to grab students' attention and convey lessons in literature and all manner of popular culture.

"If the references are important enough to be lampooned by The Simpsons, these works must be important cultural milestones," says Hofstra University adjunct English professor Richard Pioreck, who has been incorporating the denizens of Springfield into his courses for about a decade.

He currently teaches a course about the Broadway theatre and how The Simpsons have embraced various musicals and plays. Next semester, he shifts to an online literature course titled The D'oh of Homer, which includes readings from Edgar Allan Poe's The Raven and The Fall of the House of Usher, and Charles Dickens' A Christmas Carol — all referenced in Simpsons episodes.

In recent years, other universities have had courses focused on the prime-time show, which celebrated its 25th anniversary last week. Those universities include Oswego State University in New York and San Jose State University in California.

Longtime executive producer Al Jean says he's not surprised professors have embraced the program.

"Some people may think we are very vulgar, but then they find there is a lot of warmth and emotion and many people are surprised at the intelligence of some of the jokes," he says.

Pioreck says he decided to use the show after his daughter's friend passed an exam on The Devil and Daniel Webster by watching a Simpsons episode that focused on the story.

He found the sitcom usually aims for more than just the easy punchlines, with writers layering the plotlines with humour that can be appreciated by lowbrow, middlebrow and highbrow audiences alike.

For example, in one episode that parodied A Streetcar Named Desire (A Streetcar Named Marge), the dynamics of Homer and Marge Simpson's marriage are deftly illustrated through a comparison to the relationship of the couple in the play, Stella and Stanley.

"The Simpsons do a great deal of parodying, whether it's a complete script or a number here or there," Pioreck says. "Quite often, they choose family relationships; what makes a man a success is one of the things that we pursue. And you can see what happens to Homer. Even though it looks like he's not a good father, he steps up and he comes through in the end."

Jean acknowledges a theme in many episodes is the comparison of the Montgomery Burns character — the miserly owner of Springfield's nuclear power plant — to the lead character in the movie Citizen Kane, Charles Foster Kane.

"Mr. Burns ... he doesn't have fulfilment in his life even though he's the richest person in town," Pioreck says. "Here are two people who have it all, they have more money than they know what to do with and yet they're not happy. Homer has no money, but has friends and family."

Incredibly, at least one Hofstra student confesses she'd never seen the sitcom before signing up for the Simpsons-Broadway course.

Elizabeth Sarian, a 21-year-old music performance major, says she signed up because of her interest in Broadway, not the cartoon. Still, she says, the show "really does teach you a lot from watching it."

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Pop culture

"Teachers need to keep things fresh," says Denise DuVernay, an adjunct English professor at St. Xavier University in Chicago, co-author of the book The Simpsons in the Classroom: Embiggening the Learning Experience with the Wisdom of Springfield.

"They need to reach students however they can. And using The Simpsons to grab their attention, I think, is brilliant," she says. "Fighting against pop culture isn't going to do anyone any good."

Work. Early-morning disco is better than the gym to jump-start your day

Hundreds attend a dance party in downtown London. EDOUARD GUIHAIRE/AFP

At dawn, before commuting to his job in London's Canary Wharf business district, 26-year-old Nathaniel Hone joins hundreds of revellers at a dance party fuelled only by coffee and smoothies.

At the end of an alleyway in trendy Bethnal Green, a line of morning revellers is waiting patiently at the entrance of the Oval Space, a 6,000-square-foot venue with the feel of an old warehouse. Welcome to Morning Gloryville, an alcohol-free, all-ages disco.

"Morning Gloryville started a year and a half ago. We only had about 26 people at the first event," said co-founder Samantha Moyo, 26. "Now we're attracting 1,000 people per event, and we're in 16 cities all over the world," including Bangalore, New York, Paris and Tokyo.

Babies and children can party for free — provided the infants wear earmuffs against the pulsing club music.

Moyo describes it as "basically partying without drink and drugs."

Instead of beer or cocktails, the bar offers smoothies such as the Incredible Hulk, a green concoction made of apple, banana, lemon, spinach and spirulina — an algae touted as a nutritious dietary supplement.

DJ Miles Metric, wearing a skin-tight hot pink outfit, is behind his turntables as the dancers begin to arrive.

Some are dressed in pyjamas, while others are in colourful outfits, carnival fashion or in fancy dress as tigers, bears and horses. One group wears sneakers, shorts and tank tops.

"Good morning! Are you ready?" one of the organizers shouts into the microphone. "Yes!" reply 100 enthusiastic voices, quickly drowned out by the blaring music.

Kaye, 35, wearing gold sequinned pants, neon pink shoes and rainbow butterfly wings on her back, admitted it was difficult to wake up at 6 a.m. to go dancing.

"Everybody's wearing fancy dress, it's colourful, we're having coffee, smoothies, we're having a good time," she said. "It made my day better already."

AFP

Raps take care of the calm before the storm

NBA. Dinos defeat Knicks; prepare for road trip that includes dates against Bulls, Clippers, Warrior

They're riding a league-best six-game winning streak, a franchise-best record for this point in the season, and sit atop the Eastern Conference standings.

The Toronto Raptors couldn't have done much more to cushion themselves for their first major test of the season — a gruelling trip west.

The Raptors won their sixth game in a row Sunday afternoon, beating the struggling New York Knicks 118-108 behind Kyle Lowry's 22 points and nine assists.

Then they rolled their suitcases out of the comfortable confines of the Air Canada Centre to board a flight to Chicago. Awaiting them: the Bulls, Los Angeles Clippers, Denver Nuggets, Portland Trail Blazers, Golden State Warriors and Phoenix Suns.

"I'm ready for it," coach Dwane Casey said of the looming road games. "I've been preaching it, and we should be ready for it. Everyone is all excited. But again, reality is real, and we have to be ready for adversity whenever it hits. You go in with positive vibes and are ready to kick some behind, but when adversity hits, that's when you find out how close we are and how we have to stick together."

The Raptors (22-6), who reached 20 wins before Christmas for the first time in team history, have thrived on their togetherness. Toronto is also 16 games above .500 for the first time in club history. Sunday's game followed a similar balanced storyline.

Lou Williams and Greivis Vasquez came off the bench to contribute 22 and 21 points, respectively.

Terrence Ross finished with 18 points, including a jaw-dropping dunk that saw him corral a long pass from Lowry and take flight near the free-throw line. James Johnson and Jonas Valanciunas finished with 10 points apiece.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

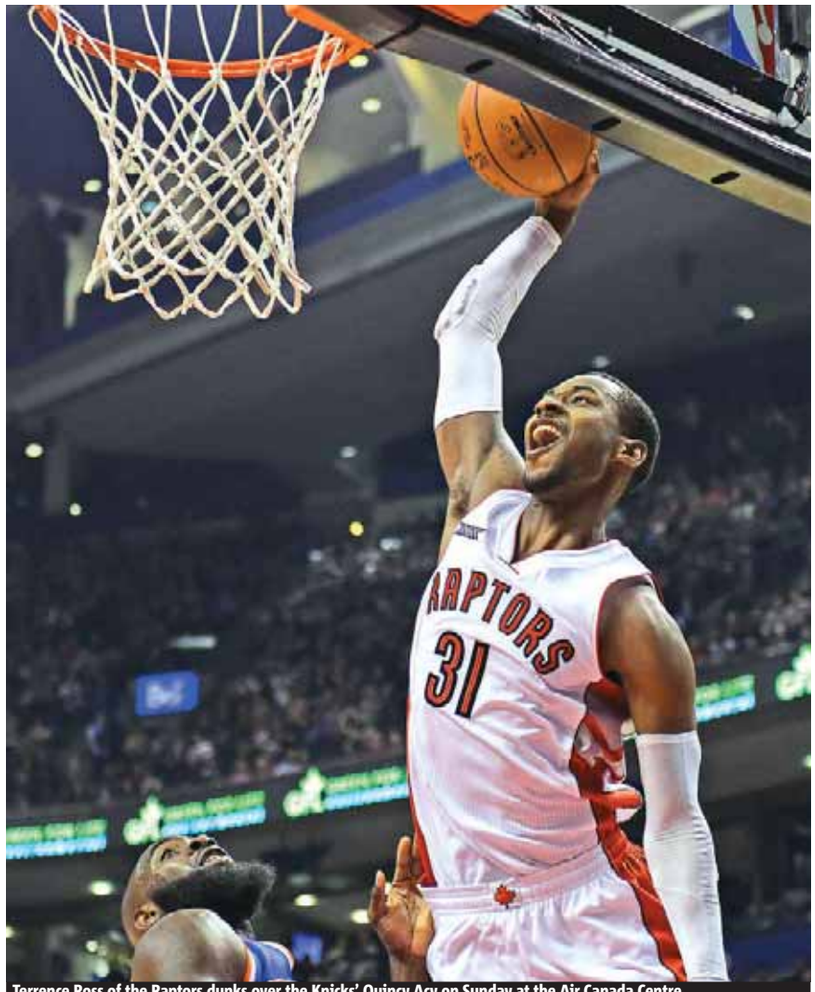
Quoted

"We can't be satisfied because we've got a 22-6 record. We want more." Raptors guard Greivis Vasquez

On Sunday

Raptors	Knicks
118	108

- The Raptors have played more home games than any other team, going 14-3 at the Air Canada Centre this season.



Terrence Ross of the Raptors dunks over the Knicks' Quincy Acy on Sunday at the Air Canada Centre.
FRANK GUNN/THE CANADIAN PRESS

Blackhawks keep Leafs from finding twine

Maple Leafs forward David Clarkson tries to score on Blackhawks goaltender Antti Raanta from behind the net in Chicago, Sunday. BRIAN KERSEY/GETTY IMAGES

Patrick Kane had a power-play goal and two assists, leading Antti Raanta and the Chicago Blackhawks to a 4-0 victory over the Toronto Maple Leafs on Sunday night.

The Blackhawks played with a "CR" on their helmets after assistant equipment manager Clint Reif died earlier in the day. The team said it was "deeply saddened" by the loss and declined further comment while asking for respect for the privacy for Reif's family and friends.

Coach Joel Quenneville, fighting back tears during his pregame media availability, said it was a tough day.

Raanta made 31 saves for his second shutout of the season, helping Chicago rebound from a 3-2 shootout loss Saturday night in Columbus.

David Rundblad, Kris Versteeg and Jonathan Toews also scored, and Patrick Sharp had three assists as the Blackhawks won for the 14th time in their last 17 games. Chicago has just one regulation loss in its last 13 games.

James Reimer made 30 saves in Toronto's third straight loss following a six-game winning streak.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

On Sunday

Blackhawks	Maple Leafs
4	0

4 SPORTS

Bills bumble away playoff hopes

NFL. Buffalo's post-season drought reaches 14 seasons after loss to lowly Raiders in Week 16

All that stood between the Buffalo Bills and a meaningful Week 17 game with a playoff bid on the line were the lowly two-win Oakland Raiders.

After a quick start, the Bills fell flat and now must ponder a 15th straight season without a post-season berth.

Derek Carr threw two touchdown passes and Sebastian Janikowski kicked four field goals to help the Raiders knock the Bills from playoff contention with a 26-24 victory Sunday.

"When you've gone this long and you're right there with a chance, and you put it all on the line and you don't come through, it hurts," Bills quarterback Kyle Orton said

The Bills (8-7) needed to win their final two games and get some help to end the NFL's longest active playoff drought at 14 seasons. But they failed at the easiest part — beating the Raiders — and will miss the playoffs once again.

"Dreams get crushed. Nightmare," running back C.J. Spiller said.

Oakland has the second longest active post-season drought at 12 but has done a good job of playing spoiler in the past five weeks, beating Kansas City, San Francisco and Buffalo after starting the season 0-10.

"I can't say enough good things about this team," interim coach Tony Sparano said. "I love the guys in that locker room. They're fighters. Anytime somebody counts them out they bounce back. It's a great sign of character."

The Bills came into the game vowing not to overlook the two-win Raiders. But Orton struggled after an early touchdown pass to Sammy Watkins, throwing an interception and posting five straight three-and-outs on Buffalo's next six possessions to put the Bills in a hole they never could overcome.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

On Sunday

Raiders	Bills
26	24

- **Playoff outlook.** Dallas clinched the NFC East with a rout of Indianapolis, ending any chance for Philadelphia to make it.
- The Pittsburgh Steelers beat Kansas City 20-12 to secure at least a wild-card berth.
- Green Bay topped Tampa Bay 20-3 and heads home for next Sunday's showdown with Detroit for the NFC North crown.
- New England earned an AFC first-round bye with its 17-16 win at the New York Jets. The Patriots can earn home-field throughout the AFC playoffs with a win over Buffalo next week.

Raiders running back Latavius Murray gets brought down by Bills defensive backs Aaron Williams and Corey Graham on Sunday in Oakland. The Bills were eliminated from playoff contention with a 26-24 loss. MARCIO JOSE SANCHEZ/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Lazar provides spark for Canada in exhibition win

Sweden's Jacob de la Rose takes a hit from Canada's Frederik Gauthier, left, and Madison Bowey on Sunday night in Ottawa. FRED CHARTRAND/THE CANADIAN PRESS

Curtis Lazar doesn't need to score goals to make an impact.

Lazar didn't pick up a single point in Canada's 5-2 win over Sweden Sunday night in world junior exhibition play, but there was no denying his impact.

The 19-year-old Lazar — the oldest player on the roster — is on loan from the Ottawa Senators for the tournament. Having NHL experience means big things are expected.

"After three months in the NHL I think he's seen a lot and he's seen many older guys in the NHL doing certain things," said Canada's coach Benoit Groulx. "You can tell maturity speaks in his case."

Lazar joined the team late Friday, but Groulx says he has already made an impact.

"He's loud on the bench," said Groulx. "He likes to communicate with his teammates, likes to cheer for them, likes to tell them about positioning and stuff like that. It comes naturally for him obviously and a good hockey club needs that."

Canada got goals from five different skaters Sunday night.

Max Domi, Josh Morrissey, Anthony Duclair, Shea Theodore and Sam Reinhart scored for Canada while Eric Comrie made 17 saves.

Gustav Forsling and Toronto Maple Leafs 2014 first-round pick William Nylander had goals for Sweden.

This was Canada's first game since finalizing its roster for the IIHF world junior championship on Saturday. The tournament gets underway Dec. 26 .

The game also marked Connor McDavid's first taste of action since he suffered a broken bone in his right hand on Nov. 11. The phenom played with Lazar and Nick Ritchie and while they didn't score, the line created a number of solid chances. THE CANADIAN PRESS

On Sunday

Canada	Sweden
5	2

Speedskating

Canadian men win silver together

The Canadian men's relay team won a silver medal Sunday while Charles Hamelin added a bronze in the men's 500-metre race on the final day of a World Cup stop in Seoul.

Hamelin, Patrick Duffy, Charle Cournoyer and Samuel Girard finished in second place in seven minutes 1.373 seconds, behind the Netherlands and ahead of China. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Alpine skiing

Crash keeps Vonn waiting for record

American Lindsey Vonn's bid for a record-equalling 62nd World Cup win will have to wait a little while longer.

The four-time World Cup winner crashed out of Sunday's super-G race in Val d'Isere, France. Elisabeth Goergl beat Olympic champion Anna Fenninger by .05 seconds to lead an Austrian 1-2.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Vonn did no damage to her troublesome right knee but landed heavily on her right elbow in Sunday's crash. GIOVANNI AULETTA/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Women's soccer

North Korea leaps Canada in rankings

Canada has fallen one spot to No. 9 in the FIFA world women's soccer rankings.

North Korea vaulted past the Canadian women in the latest list, jumping four places to No. 7.

Germany moved into top spot, relegating the U.S. to second spot. France rose one place to third, dropping defending World Cup champion Japan to fourth.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

More bronze than ever

Ronaldo unveils statue in Portugal

Cristiano Ronaldo has unveiled a statue of himself on his home island of Madeira in Portugal.

Ronaldo calls the larger-than-life bronze statue "prettier than me," according to Spanish news agency Europa Press.

The 29-year-old Real Madrid forward helped the Spanish team win the Club World Cup in Morocco on Saturday. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Cristiano Ronaldo with his statue on Sunday. GETTY IMAGES

Brazil's women win at home

Brazil's Marta controls the ball as United States' Christie Rampone defends in the goalless final at the International Women's Football Tournament in Brasilia, Brazil, Sunday. The hosts won the trophy because they had better standings in the group stage. ERALDO PERES/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Wounded Skrtel saves Liverpool from shame

Tie at the 97th. One man down, Reds find a late equalizer against Arsenal at Anfield

Liverpool's Martin Skrtel, left, celebrates scoring a late equalizer against Arsenal at Anfield on Sunday in Liverpool, England. PAUL ELLIS/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Liverpool required an injury-time goal to avoid a morale-sapping defeat to Arsenal on Sunday in a Premier League match that exposed both teams' frailties as they struggle to bridge the gap to the top four.

Wearing a bandage to cover up a nasty head wound, Martin Skrtel leapt high at a corner to score a powerful header in the seventh minute of stoppage time and rescue a 2-2 draw for 10-man Liverpool at Anfield.

Liverpool dominated the game but again lacked a cutting edge in the continued absence of injured striker Daniel Sturridge, with Philippe Coutinho's 45th-minute opener the only reward for its effervescent build-up play until Skrtel's late intervention.

Despite being overrun, Arsenal came from behind through goals by France internationals Mathieu Debuchy and Olivier Giroud from the team's first two efforts on target. The visitors should have gone on to take maximum points because Liverpool substitute Fabio Borini was sent off at the start of second-half stoppage time for two quick bookings.

"There's no doubt we deserved to win the game, our performance level was outstanding," Liverpool manager Brendan Rodgers said. "Our performance today was better than when we won here last (season) 5-1."

Last season's runner-up, Liverpool is in 10th place and nine points behind fourth-place West Ham heading toward the mid-point of the season.

A late goal was decisive in Sunday's other game, with Adam Johnson volleying home a 90th-minute winner for Sunderland in a 1-0 victory at northeast rival Newcastle. It sealed an unprecedented fourth straight derby win for Sunderland.

"It makes it a very special Christmas for us," said Sunderland manager Gus Poyet, whose team climbed four points clear of the relegation zone. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

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GMCL reserves the right to amend or terminate offers for any reason, in whole or in part, at any time without prior notice. 4Offer valid to eligible retail lessees in Canada who have obtained credit approval by and entered into a lease agreement with GM Financial, and who accept delivery from December 2, 2014 through January 2nd, 2015 of any new or demonstrator 2015 model year Chevrolet. City Express excluded at outset of program; will be eligible once residuals become available. General Motors of Canada will pay one month's lease payment or two bi-weekly lease payments as defined on the lease agreement (inclusive of taxes). After the first month, lessee will be required to make all remaining scheduled payments over the remaining term of the lease agreement. PPSA/RDPRM is not due. Consumer may be required to pay Dealer Fees. Insurance, licence, and applicable taxes not included. Additional conditions and limitations apply. GM reserves the right to modify or terminate this offer at any time without prior notice. See dealer for details. 5$500 Boxing Week Bonus is a manufacturer-to-consumer credit (tax inclusive) available on the retail purchase or lease of 2014 or 2015 model year Chevrolet Sonic, Cruze, Trax, Equinox, Traverse, Silverado Light Duty (1500) Double Cab, Silverado HD (gas engine only), 2014 or 2015 model year Buick Verano, Encore, Enclave, 2014 or 2015 model year GMC Terrain, Acadia, Sierra Light Duty (1500) Double Cab, Sierra HD (gas engine only) and 2014 or 2015 model year Cadillac ATS Sedan and SRX delivered in Canada between December 15, 2014 and January 2, 2015. For the province of Quebec the offer ends on December 31, 2014.

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AUGMENTED REALITY

Stuck on 12 Across? Scan this image with your Metro News app for today's crossword and Sudoku answers. It's OK. No one's watching.

→ See the full instructions on Metro's Voices page.

Horoscopes by Sally Brompton

♈ Aries
March 21 - April 20
Colleagues and employers may need convincing that what you are planning is going to work but it won't bother you because you have self-belief. It'll to be a great week for starting projects.

♉ Taurus
April 21 - May 21
You like surprises and that's just as well because they will be arriving every few minutes over the next couple of days. Be adventurous. Be outrageous.

♊ Gemini
May 22 - June 21
Keep your wits about you today or you could lose out financially. Someone you think is a friend is actually a secret rival, so don't don't accept what they tell you without checking it out first.

♋ Cancer
June 22 - July 23
This will be an interesting time and many strange things are likely to happen over the next few days. Chances are you will meet people who challenge your worldview.

♌ Leo
July 24 - Aug. 23
Break free of habits that hold you back from realizing your potential and today's new moon will help. Look at the big picture over the next 24 hours.

♍ Virgo
Aug. 24 - Sept. 23
This is one of the best times of the year for trying new things. Make the most of today's new moon to branch out creatively and do things you never have.

♎ Libra
Sept. 24 - Oct. 23
A personal issue that has been causing you problems will take a turn for the better. The most important thing is that you don't try to hang on to what is now moving out of your life.

♏ Scorpio
Oct. 24 - Nov. 22
Wherever you go and whatever you do today you will meet people who inspire you to be bigger and better. You will also, in your own small way, be an inspiration to others.

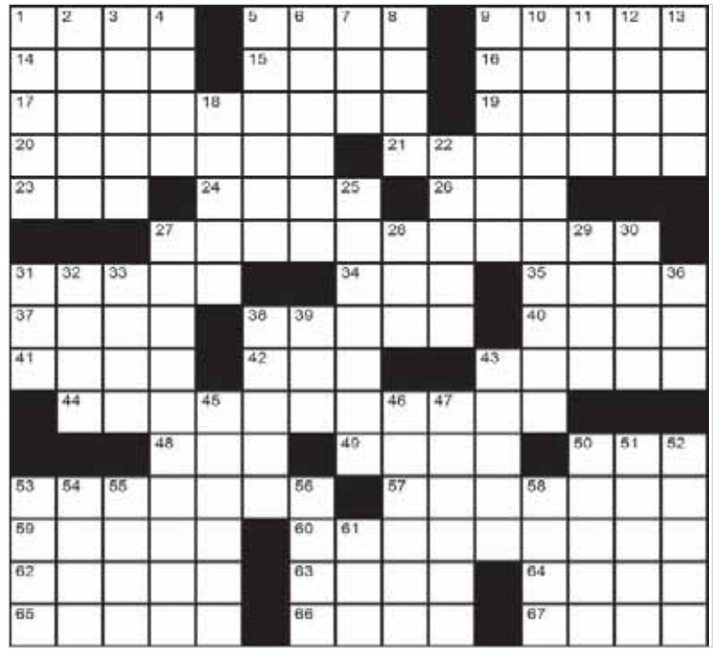
♐ Sagittarius
Nov. 23 - Dec. 21
Unexpected changes may unsettle you today but it won't be long before you regain your balance and find ways to make them pay.

♑ Capricorn
Dec. 22 - Jan. 20
Today's new moon in your sign makes this one of the very best times of the year, especially for creative endeavors and affairs of the heart. Tackle life head on.

♒ Aquarius
Jan. 21 - Feb. 19
Someone you are close to is likely to do something that shocks you but you should have seen it coming. Why not show how much they mean to you with unconditional support?

♓ Pisces
Feb. 20 - March 20
You will get the red carpet treatment wherever you go today. But you cannot possibly accept every invitation that comes your way, so be selective.

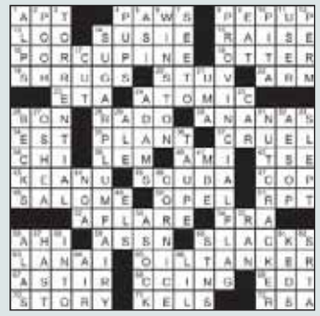
Crossword: Canada Across and Down by Kelly Ann Buchanan



Across
1. "__ Christmas" by Wham!
5. Father-in-law for Esau
9. "We Three Kings of Orient Are" part: "_ __ of wonder..."
14. Noted volcano
15. Deviate
16. Elbow: French
17. 2008 Canadian short film starring Jonathan Torrens about Christmas foliage that retaliates
19. Bit ___ blood (Tension)
20. Festive decoration
21. Gongs
23. Select
24. Centimetre, e.g.
26. Celebrity's agt.
27. Manitoba: __ __ Provincial Park
31. Handles on swords
34. Be in debt
35. Wash-and-__
37. In the blink __ eye: 2 wds.
38. Like porridge bits
40. Mr. Foley
41. Ancient's 53
42. Drollness
43. Dancer Mr. Kelly's
44. As per #60-Across... Kevin's mom played by Canadian actress Catherine O'Hara, Kate __
48. Green, for one
49. Max __ (World Chess Champion of 1935 to 1937)
50. Telly-watcher's network
53. Tropical destinations
57. Hanukkah candelabrum
59. Eye-related prefix
60. 1990 Christmas-time movie comedy starring Macaulay Culkin: 2 wds.
62. Christmas tune: "Do You Hear What _ __?"
63. Enthusiastic
64. Chop the veggies
65. "___ luck to ya!" (Hope ya win!)
66. French 'words'
67. Swill

Down
1. Free: 2 wds.
2. "It's _ __!" (Crook-to-crook warning)
3. Hagar the Horrible's dog
4. Weight unit in China
5. More level or fair
6. Four-wheeled carriage
7. Association, briefly
8. Da's Russian opposite
9. Christmas tune: "_ __, _ Come, Emmanuel"
10. Skiing surface sort: 2 wds.
11. Big brass?
12. Eve's beloved
13. Wine hues
18. Jazz improvisations
22. Liv Tyler's 'Lord of the Rings' movies part
25. Terrier type, commonly
27. Visitor in Clement Clarke Moore's famous Christmas poem: 2 wds.
28. Sheep sort
29. Hollywood icon James
30. Conserve
31. Christmas, e.g.
32. "Let me know __ __in your way."
33. Secular
36. Home base, shortly
38. Baby barn bird
39. Garlic: French
43. Actress Ms. Davis
45. Northern Lights = __ Borealis
46. Mountain's top
47. Some fabrics
50. Way to cook
51. Baccarat call
52. Little bird's sound
53. Churn
54. Lingering noise
55. Cooking fat
56. Pillow cover
58. Alberta town
61. Egg-related prefix

Friday's Crossword



Online

See today's answers at metronews.ca/answers

Conceptis Sudoku by Dave Green

How to play
Fill in the grid, so that every row, every column and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1-9. There is no math involved.

Friday's Sudoku

1	2	4	3	6	9	7	8	5
5	8	3	7	4	2	1	9	6
7	9	6	1	8	5	2	3	4
4	3	2	9	7	6	8	5	1
6	1	5	8	2	3	9	4	7
8	7	9	4	5	1	3	6	2
2	4	7	6	9	8	5	1	3
3	6	8	5	1	7	4	2	9
9	5	1	2	3	4	6	7	8

	7			5		1	9	
8	2					5		4
			6				2	3
		8		9	1			
7								5
			8	3		9		
3	8				5			
4		6					8	1
	9	7		2			5	

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It's time to put a stop to privatization.

Last month, a new computer program threw Ontario's social assistance system into chaos.

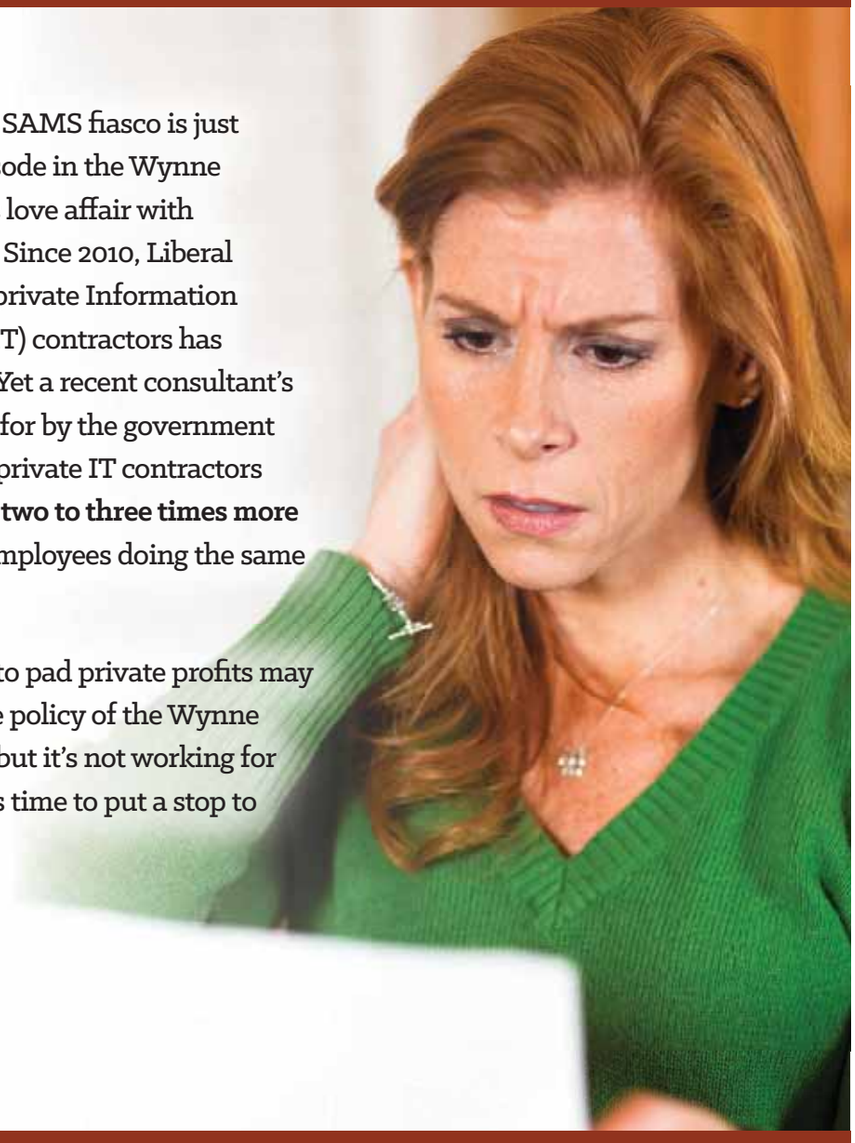
The Social Assistance Management System (SAMS) paid some people too much, others too little, and some not at all. It sent cheques to wrong addresses and the wrong people. Some recipients were cut off altogether. Others saw their health benefits cancelled.

One family of five got a cheque for $5.00.

Frontline social services staff had 13,000 problems with the system in the first five weeks. What did Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne call it? "A glitch."

It wasn't. The SAMS fiasco is just the latest episode in the Wynne government's love affair with privatization. Since 2010, Liberal spending on private Information Technology (IT) contractors has skyrocketed. Yet a recent consultant's report – paid for by the government – found that private IT contractors typically cost **two to three times more** than public employees doing the same work.

Paying more to pad private profits may be a signature policy of the Wynne government, but it's not working for Ontarians. It's time to put a stop to privatization.



Please contact your MPP.

A message from the Ontario Public Service Employees Union

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